

Government Orders

been a \$10 differential between Alberta and Newfoundland? Should the numbers have been skewed in that direction?

A second example is under transportation looking through the report I mentioned a few moments ago. Even under transportation there is disparity. For instance as noted in this report New Brunswick received \$131.3 million under a program negotiated between 1987 to 1996 to do highway and transportation work. Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Newfoundland received millions of dollars to improve their highways. Yet when we look at Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario on the list there are no dollars for those respective programs.

The question is: Did we create equity by the formula to begin with or not? If we did, should we be allocating special funding over and above? Should not all provinces and all residents of Canada be able to receive the same type of treatment if equalization is real and that we do not have to keep shoring it up by giving political funds or other kinds of funds at a later date?

Another example cited in the document is that some provinces receive additional money for health and education. Special dollars are allocated. Around \$1 billion is provided for what are called the seven less prosperous provinces, the same seven provinces that are receiving moneys through equalization.

As legislators and as people who want to create fairness, we want fairness. When Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia say that the formula is fine and that they are receiving no benefits, they should raise the question: Are the benefits after that of other government programs allocated fairly across this nation? We should ask that question.

Looking back at my own political experience provincially I raised this once in a while but not in the same context. I often look at provincial treasurers and those who negotiate at the table as to whether they ask the same question. If we created equality with Bill C-3, why are the other funds not allocated from the Government of Canada done equally for all Canadians no matter where they live?

We should think about that in this assembly as we proceed to the budget in the third week of February and look at the new programs and raise the question: Are all Canadians no matter where they live going to receive equal treatment, have equal access? Will each province have some equality in the distribution of the funds of that budget? If that is so, then we have improved the circumstances and we have made a contribution.

I am not always sure going back in history whether parliamentarians or governments look at it on that basis. It was often allocated for political reasons. Often there was this misconception that equalization had not occurred so some more would be

added to some of the provinces that are called the have not provinces of Canada.

With those remarks, we in the Reform Party in general support the concept of equalization. We are concerned about the dollar amount of \$8 billion and that there was not some kind of reduction. Because of that we are not going to be voting for the bill. The other concern I have is the one I raised about continued equalization and fairness in other moneys that become available for us to distribute as parliamentarians.

• (1335)

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of observations and a question. Maybe I can allude to the question and then go on to the observation.

I appreciated the remarks of the previous speaker with respect to this matter and especially Bill C-3. I want him to elaborate a little with respect to his comments on programs outside of the equalization program.

Perhaps I misunderstood him but the message I got was that the hon. member supported the notion of equalization within the ambit of what we call the equalization program. Then he began to raise questions about the notion of equalization as a principle as it pertains to other programs and he specifically mentioned a couple of programs. One in particular was the RRAP. If I recall correctly he pointed out that on a per capita basis Newfoundland was getting about \$12, Alberta about \$2, and Ontario even less.

It makes me wonder if he is saying that equalization is fine insofar as the large equalization program is concerned, but when it comes to specific programs, RRAP for example, that we should not consider equalization at all, that we should just throw it out the window. Also, if we use population as a basis Alberta will get whatever its share is according to population and Ontario the same and Manitoba the same. That is what I am beginning to wonder.

I do think that equalization as we understand it embodies the highest ideals of this country. It reflects our society, that being a caring and sharing one. It says we are one country. We are not two countries; we are one and everyone is going to be treated equally in so far as some of these basic programs are concerned.

As I listened to the previous speaker from the Bloc a few minutes ago I thought that it must be embarrassing for a separatist in this House to be participating in this kind of a debate. Embarrassing. In fact to participate would suggest that the participants are almost shameless because when we talk about equalization we are talking about the benefits of Canada, the benefits of the citizenship of the country. That is what equalization is about: As Canadians they are treated by their federal government with a particular standard of respect. It does not matter where they live, in Newfoundland, Alberta, Quebec or wherever, they are going to be treated with respect and with a certain touch of equality. Imagine the kind of embarrassment