

Government Orders

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I too agree with a good deal of what the member was saying.

In Victoria last week the minister responsible for constitutional affairs indicated, if my ears were correct, that one of the reasons his government does not want equal representation for each province in the Senate is that the have not provinces would control the Senate.

I found that astonishing for somebody who believes in sharing, in compassion and that sort of thing, a new minister of an NDP government, to say. I compliment the member's own provincial premier for in effect endorsing a Triple-E Senate. I wonder if he has any comments on what appears to be the attitude of the new NDP government in British Columbia.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, I saw that exchange between the member from Edmonton and the minister of justice in British Columbia. I believe the minister advised the member from Edmonton to stop while he was ahead after getting into so much trouble with his line of questioning.

An hon. member: While he was behind.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Yes. He could have stopped while he was behind. That would have been an even better piece of advice.

It is clear that we are not going to have an equal Senate across this country. I do not think we need to spend a great deal of time on it. We are not going to have the province of Prince Edward Island having the same number of senators as the provinces of Ontario or Quebec and I do not think it has anything to do with the discussions that we are having today with regard to cuts in social programs.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment first of all on the excellent comments by the member from Saskatoon.

I would be intrigued with observations that he might be able to make on the fact that CAP was a cost-shared program between the federal and provincial governments. It had strings attached. I would be interested in his observations and a comparison with some of the other programs we have in the country, in fact, federal spending on post-secondary education and health. It

used to be tagged to ensure that that funding did get spent in those areas. Of course, it was changed under the Liberal's six and five program.

I would be interested in his observations on the benefits of that kind of system and some of the difficulties that there might be. He will know, just for background, the difficulty of the former government in British Columbia. It was alleged in any case that it spent a great deal of post-secondary education and health money on highways. I would be interested in his observations and how he might try to resolve that issue so that we can ensure that federal transfer payments are spent in the places they should be.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, so many of these are issues that do not affect one province alone. Canadians are relatively mobile, at least in provinces outside of Quebec. They move across this country. People from Newfoundland go to Ontario, people from Saskatchewan go to British Columbia, and so on.

When we are dealing with issues of education, health care or social assistance, we are dealing with matters of national importance which affect Canada in a national way. A university in British Columbia services not only British Columbians, but Canadians from all across the country. That is why it is important that the Government of Canada respond in a national way to this issue, respond to the question of funding of universities and colleges across this country in a national way, and recognize that there is a benefit to Canada as a whole from those universities and colleges all across the country. It is important for Canada to know on what it is spending its money. It is important that the provinces spend the money that comes to them for health, post-secondary education and social assistance on those very programs.

In the social assistance area, we have seen that the tied nature of the program means that the provinces do spend the money on social assistance recipients in their provinces. Not only in British Columbia, but in New Brunswick and in other provinces, we have seen Social Credit, Liberal and Conservative governments spending federal dollars for other purposes than were desired.

Then we saw the federal government less desirous of making sure those provinces spend health care dollars