

*Government Orders*

I have spoken of this matter before in the House. There is an example in which there was a single mother who went back to school and used a student loan to finance her education. She got her education and a job and now finds herself holding down two jobs and still having a great deal of difficulty getting rid of this student loan debt. The interest has grown faster than she can pay it off. She is now facing sending her own children to university with her own debt still unpaid, and her children will now be forced to borrow in even larger amounts because tuition fees are going up.

I ask that we reconsider what we are doing with this bill. Are we going to help these people? I think it is very important that we consider who we are hurting when we do these things. We are hearing that there are going to be some tax base improvements and that there will be perhaps some increased benefits to the provinces—the minister said \$200 million. It will go only to certain provinces because in this whole system it is all based on need and equalization only goes to the poorer provinces. Have we reconsidered all of the provinces? Some of the provinces that were known to be rich have suffered the most lately.

All of these things have to be reconsidered seriously, and not just in light of the upcoming federal election in which this government is intent on going around saying to everybody: "See what a great government we are because we have given you \$10 million". Forget the billions it has cut back before. I have a terrible feeling that this is what this bill is going to allow the government to do.

I am happy if the government can give things, but I do not want it to just do it once. I want the government to do it and mean it and not to be dismantling something behind the scenes after telling everyone that it has now found the true path to self-righteousness and all of the rest of it. I somehow do not believe the government. I would really think that the rest of Canadians feel as I do. How can we believe this government?

The government has told us things before that really did not come out. How can we and why should we believe that this will help anyone anywhere?

One of the things that this bill proposes is a change to the base year for the ceiling provision. The attitude is that the government is going to change the base year—

nothing wrong with that. Normally you change the base year and things go their merry way. Currently the base year being used is 1987-88. This piece of legislation would make the base year 1992-93. How can we make the base year 1992-93 when we are not there yet? What about 1991-92? How do we use the 1992-93 base year for 1991-92?

• (1250)

**Mr. McDermid:** I will explain it to you.

**Mrs. Marleau:** I would really like to have you explain it to me. To me it is shenanigans. It is pure and simple.

**Mr. McDermid:** You better tell that to the provincial ministers because they negotiated it.

**Mrs. Marleau:** The minister is quite willing to give explanations now, but that is backtracking. I would like to believe that this was all done in good faith but I have this suspicious mind that there is more to it than meets the eye. Maybe not. Maybe for once, I am wrong. I hope I am wrong. I have not been wrong too many times before but maybe this once. If I am, I will honestly admit it and come out and congratulate you on a fabulous bill when it is all done.

This bill makes what are referred to as tax based improvements. There are about 30 tax base changes which are being made to update and improve the measurement of relative fiscal capacity of the provinces. Does that not sound great? It just sounds great, but what does it mean? That is exactly the case in point. What really does it mean?

According to the officials conducting the briefing I attended, this will result in a \$200 million deal in additional benefits for the provinces for this year. Great, hallelujah. Two hundred million may sound like a large amount of money but perhaps the amounts should be \$2 billion.

It is so easy to fool people when you are dealing with these large numbers. Believe me, \$200 million is very little in the budgets of most provinces when they are dealing with health care and post-secondary education.

I realize it is in addition to what they get now, but they should probably get a lot more than this additional \$200 million, which sounds like a large amount of money but is probably very little.