

Government Orders

There is no question about it. If we have a properly educated workforce we can deal with just about anything. The pressure on our social programs will ease. The pressure on our health care system will ease. Political pressure will ease. All of those pressures seen on a daily basis will ease off.

Simply put, with an educated population we can do miracles. That will not only put Canada in the best position to be on the leading edge in the world community, but it will also ensure that Canada will remain on that leading edge.

I was watching a program about a week or so ago on television. It was on *The Journal* I think. The president of one of the Asian republics was asked about the difference between Canada and Singapore, or one of those countries and to compare the difference between North Americans and the Asian population. He used the correlation that the people in his country are like a high compression engine, while the workforce in North America is like a low compression engine.

I thought that correlation between the two was really interesting. If anything he was giving us a signal that while we might be great at creation and great at coming up with good new ideas, what is needed to be done is to streamline the system and make it efficient in order to improve the area of productivity.

I began by saying the only way to improve productivity is by increasing investment in education. What we are seeing right now is a lack of investment in the area of education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Questions and comments. The five hours of debate are now expired. The length of speeches are now maximum 10 minutes without a question and comment period.

Mr. Blaikie: Do we still have questions and comments, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Do you have a question?

Mr. Blaikie: I was going to ask the member a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona for a question or comment.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, the member has dwelt at some length on all the social policy questions that attend the whole question of transfer payments to the provinces, et cetera, and the

way in which the federal government is cutting back on the provinces.

The member only came to this House in 1988 and I wonder if he is aware that the first unilateral cutback in federal transfer payments to the provinces happened under a Liberal government in 1982.

One of the things that has always disturbed me, amused me, and irritated me at times, is the fact that this trend toward the unilateral reduction of federal commitment in cost-sharing programs began under a Liberal government.

At the time the Conservative Party, when it was in opposition, railed against this unilateral violation of the federal-provincial agreement. It was thought to be a heinous act against co-operative federalism and, of course, it was. The only thing is that as soon as it came into power, no sooner than had it been in power, the then Minister of National Health and Welfare, the member for Provencher, one of his first acts was to unilaterally reduce EPF.

• (1600)

So I find it odd that Liberals and Conservatives should go at each other in this way when both are guilty of this, albeit the Conservatives, if you want to look at the world numerically, are more guilty in the sense that they have done it more often and that they have done it more severely in the sense that doing it more often adds up.

The fact of the matter is that the principle of the federal government unilaterally reducing federal transfer payments to the provinces was one established by the Liberal Minister of Finance, who now sits in the other place and who shall go unnamed.

Perhaps the Liberal Party has changed its mind. Perhaps it has repented of its earlier disposition toward federal-provincial programs. If that is so, we would like to see a confession, some repentance and then the member could speak freely about this new-found approach by the Liberal Party on federal-provincial fiscal arrangements.

Mr. Harb: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to dwell on the past, but I want to talk about the present, the province of Ontario for example. I do not want to go back as far as 1981 or 1982 because it does not matter how far back I go, I probably would not find that we have ever had a socialist government at the federal level to compare the different governments and what they have done.