

Government Orders

Otherwise he would be in contravention of the Constitution. I would not want the hon. member from Winnipeg to get that crazy idea.

Mr. Brian O'Kurley (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very attentively to the debate.

I was concerned about the degree of partisanship that seems to have entered the debate on such an important issue as transfer payments and meeting the very important needs of our society.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he recalls, during the recent first ministers' conference, when the Liberal premier of New Brunswick indicated that there should be a new structure for health care servicing in his province and in provinces right across the country.

He was indicating that it was time to recognize the fiscal limitations on governments at all levels. In a recent newspaper article, the headlines indicated that the NDP government in Ontario has recognized the need to limit expenditures in the area of health care as well.

The old ways of political partisanship on issues as important as transfer payments have proven to be less than productive. As Liberal premiers in New Brunswick and NDP premiers in Ontario now recognize, deficit spending and the deficit way of operating the budget compromise the capacity of future generations to meet the needs of society.

There seems to be some misinformation here, and I would just like the hon. member to clarify. Has there been an increase in recent years? Will there continue to be an increase? Or has, as some of the members opposite suggest, there been a decrease or a cut?

Mr. Holtmann: I would also like to comment on behalf of my colleague on this particular issue.

Let us get it absolutely straight. The transfers of moneys from the Government of Canada to those in these programs have increased.

The argument being made opposite is that they have not increased to the level we would have liked to increase them to, which would obviously have driven our deficit that much higher. That is the argument. It has increased.

Let me say something and my colleague opposite from Winnipeg would agree. It is not nice being in a have not province. I would like Manitoba to be a have province. I resent being called a have not province. We have great things going for us in Manitoba. We get some great benefits in the province of Manitoba through these programs and so do the maritime provinces and so does Quebec.

The idea of sometimes being self-sustaining as a province or all-contributing to the benefit of this country is what I work toward as a member of Parliament from Manitoba. I sometimes think that when some provinces like Alberta and B.C. make some contributions through their tax structures that end up in other provinces it is a Robin Hood scenario.

We should not be ever and ever dependent on transfers from provinces. We should somehow find ways of allowing us to somehow grow and flourish. If there is any policy left in this country which favours development in different areas, that is what I would like. We live in a part of Canada that should allow us to grow and function no differently than Alberta, for example.

We may not have all the natural resources, but I will say that the goal here is certainly one to use these transfers in an effective way. It may not be the amount we would like to spend. We have to live within the means. The statement always said is: "Live within the means of your income". Governments have all lived beyond the means of their incomes. We have to live as a country within the means of the prosperity of this land. If it is not as prosperous as we like to spend, then we have to realize that and adjust.

I think we all agree that it is an important program to continue.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to rise and join in this debate on Bill C-60.

To take a look at it one has to put it in the context of what has been happening in this country in the last number of years.

First of all, one has to look at the economic situation that this country has found itself in and how the federal government has prepared for the economic downturn that it precipitated.