

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

part and parcel of our hospital, doctor and senior citizen medical health services. There should be no question about that.

I would like some reassurance from the Government on the following. In the event that a province attempts to include all ambulance services under their services for hospitalization and medical care as well as for senior citizens under the EPF program, I am not sure that they will qualify for any funding, let alone funding under the present legislation.

We are approaching the 21st century. A formerly prominent personage in the country said that the 20th century belongs to Canada. At the rate we are going in this Parliament—and I do not want to blame it all on the present Government since this started in 1975 under the former Government—what we are really saying with this type of legislation is that the 21st century does not belong to Canada. It belongs on the backs of the young, the sick, the poor, the universities, the hospitals, the medical care plan, the provinces and the unemployed.

This type of legislation is an accurate symptom of the disease that is destroying co-operative federalism. It is destroying the sharing among Canadians of different walks of life of the costs with respect to providing what is a fundamental human need and human right. The Government House Leader or his Parliamentary Secretary should say that the subject matter of this Bill will be referred back to the appropriate committee, where it can be dealt with in a matter of a day, with respect to bringing in appropriate amendments to restore the program to the 1977 funding formula, as pronounced by the Party in power and by the present Prime Minister.

I now wish to deal with the decrease in the increases—and I want to be fair, it is not a cut in Government spending, it is a decrease in the increases. The increases that were projected and agreed upon as between the provinces, the hospital associations, the medical associations, and the federal Government over so many years, will cost my province \$200 million over the next five years. That is less than is now the case under the Minister of Finance's new deal. That should cause the ghost of Franklin D. Roosevelt to rise out of his grave and scream about the perversion of the phrase "new deal". The reduction in the increases amounts to \$2 billion. Of course, this gets transferred to the provinces, municipalities, hospitals and various other services that are an adjunct to the health care delivery system. The money has to be raised somewhere.

● (1950)

Perhaps I can provide some support for the current Government in terms of sound business practices and efficiency. It seems to me that it is more efficient and less administratively costly to have the collection and delivery of tax dollars done by the national Government on its own behalf and on behalf of the provinces, universities and health care services. The Government then distributes the money under the fifty-fifty formula, and that is what the Government said it would do. It said it would return to the 1977 funding formula.

I am trying to be calm and reasonable. I am not trying to provoke my hon. friends opposite. I really mean it when I say that I am trying to be helpful. If Government Members wanted to win plaudits right across the political spectrum in Canada and maybe even pull the teeth of members of the Opposition, not many of which I have left, and reduce whatever effectiveness we do have, they would carry out what they said they would do. I think I can safely say on behalf of my Party that if the Government were to do this, we would not object or obstruct and we would support wholeheartedly a return to the 1977 funding formula. The costs of that to the Canadian people would be less than they would be if a multiplicity of provinces, municipalities, hospitals, health care services and universities were to undertake the collection.

Two provinces have objected to this move vociferously. New Brunswick expressed its opposition in a well prepared brief and passed a unanimous resolution in its Legislature. The Province of Manitoba, which is governed by the Party to which I happen to belong, not only presented a brief but appeared before us. That brief has not been refuted by the Minister of Finance or the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) in any way, shape or form of which I am aware.

The brief indicated that the fiscal capacity of the provinces in 1985-86 was about 100 per cent, more or less. The fiscal capacity now for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, even Ontario and certainly Manitoba is under 100 per cent. The fiscal capacity of Alberta is at 200 per cent, although with the oil crash I doubt if the figures are valid any longer in the case of Alberta. In fact, if the national average of fiscal capacity is 100 per cent, I doubt very much if more than one province will be able to make up the difference in the increased costs required to cover the decrease in the increases imposed by the federal Government.

I am trying to think of what else I could say to persuade my hon. friends that there is still time left between now and June 27 for them to say that they are prepared to rethink this matter. I for one would never rise to say: "Aha, you guys backed down". I would not do that and I promise to persuade my colleagues not to do so either. I am not sure that I would succeed in persuading them, but I think I could. I can say one thing and that is that I, members of my Party and people from all walks of life would applaud the Government for doing so.

No one is 100 per cent perfect and no one is 100 per cent wrong. It takes a big person to admit he or she is wrong and it takes a big person to say that he or she will change. Equally so, it takes a big Government, a good Government, at whatever level, to say that it will change what it has proposed. I think that, generally, people will applaud that. My colleagues opposite would do it if they had the courage and the political will. I believe they have the courage but they lack the political will. I think they worry too much about what Charlie Lynch, Jeffrey Simpson and others might say in their columns. Do not worry about that.

Mr. Howie: It's Doug Fisher we're worried about.