

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

political staff by 50 per cent to 53 per cent, depending on the Minister. It is the same Government that is singing austerity across the country and telling senior citizens that they will have to accept cut-backs in the increase to their old age pensions and telling middle income and poor families that they will have cut-backs in the amount of family allowance they would have received because they are doing their bit to fight the deficit.

The deficit is being fought, but it is not being fought in the offices of cabinet Ministers or the Office of the Prime Minister, who has achieved an increase of almost 50 per cent in his personal political office staff. Furthermore, those figures do not include the cost of shuttling his film team from coast to coast in Hercules aircraft so that we may have capture for posterity the picture of our Prime Minister as he travels from West Coast to East Coast. According to the press reports, we see in one fell swoop that one particular junket cost the taxpayers approximately \$40,000 in hotel costs alone, and we expect that the cost of the Hercules in the short term is probably closer to the \$1 million that was quoted in last week's press. If I had that record I think I would also be a little embarrassed to speak out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to continue my submissions with respect to Bill C-96, but I am delighted that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has entered the Chamber. I know that his staff has advised him about the nature of the debate that has occurred today. No doubt, the Minister is deeply chagrined by the submissions made on this side of the House.

Now that he is back in the House, I would like to ask him what he meant when he said in the House, on March 23, 1982, as reported at page 15758 of *Hansard*:

The only sign—

The federal Government:

—shows of cutting spending is by shifting the burden of the established programs funding on to the provincial governments. The provinces are now moving into a deficit position, a position which will make it more difficult for them to finance this shift in spending.

The Minister went on to say:

That is not co-operative federalism. That is predatory federalism, and it will not and cannot work in this country.

I am sure that the Minister recalls his words. He was speaking four short years ago. What a difference four years makes. What a difference it makes to cross the aisle of the House of Commons.

Given that Bill C-96 has been presented for third reading today, one might question the Minister's sincerity. Of course, Members cannot directly question the sincerity, the integrity or credibility of a particular Minister of the Crown, but Canadians are asking tonight what the Minister of Finance meant four years ago when he said that predatory federalism will not and cannot work in this country. What did he mean

four years ago when he said that it was unfair for the federal Government to transfer the task of deficit reduction on to the backs of the provinces in Canada? Obviously, the Minister of Finance was singing one tune in March, 1982 and is singing another tune today as Minister of Finance. Is it any wonder that the Conservative Government has literally and absolutely frittered away the support that it obtained in the election campaign of 1984? One of the reasons why the Government has so dramatically lost the mandate that was given to it two short years ago is credibility and trust.

Let me quote the Minister of Finance again, this time on March 24, 1982. He said, as quoted at page 15774 of *Hansard*:

Taking the action of unilaterally cutting the financing, which the Government is now proposing—

Of course, he was referring to the Liberal Government:

—and then having some discussions with the provinces, surely puts the cart before the horse. We should be reversing this procedure.

That is what the Minister of Finance said four years ago when he was in opposition. However, when he became Minister of Finance he decided to cut \$8 million in federal transfer payments to the provinces for post-secondary education and health care.

What happened to the consultative process that the Minister spoke of when he was in opposition four years ago? What happened to the consultative process that was promised during the last election campaign? What happened to all those lofty pronouncements made in the days and weeks following the election in September, 1984? The Minister of Finance and others on the government side, including the Prime Minister, stood up in the House time and time again and said, with considerable satisfaction and considerable sincerity as we thought at the time, that because of the election of the Conservative Government Canada had entered into a new era, an era of national reconciliation.

The Minister said that Canada, in terms of federal-provincial relations, had entered a new phase where the provinces would be consulted before the federal Government took any action affecting the provinces. What did the Government do with respect to Bill C-96, given its promises during the election campaign and shortly after? Did the Minister consult with the provincial Governments and provincial Treasurers?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Yes.

Mr. Nunziata: I think not.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Well, you are wrong.

● (1930)

Mr. Nunziata: Was there a new era of national reconciliation? One can hardly speak of national reconciliation when each and every one of the provincial Governments in Canada vigorously objected to this legislation when it was introduced in the House. Each and every one of those provincial Premiers,