

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

listening to the provinces and other political jurisdictions to come up with something that we all more or less agree on, and develop a consensus. But this is unilateral action. The Bill says: "We know that you do not like it, provinces, but we are going to jam this down your throats and cut back on the kind of funding we have been making over the years."

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this is not a particularly new development. It has been going on for some time. When you look at the data, you will notice that back in 1977 the funding for post-secondary education and health care between the federal Government and the provinces was fifty-fifty. Fifty per cent came from the provinces and 50 per cent came from the federal Government. Since 1977, this percentage has continuously been eroded over the years so that by 1990, based on the provisions of Bill C-96, the federal Government will be contributing only 36 per cent to post-secondary education and health care to the provinces of Canada. This means the overwhelming burden of these two areas will fall on provincial Governments. That means one of three things. First, either the services provided will have to be curtailed significantly or, second, additional user fees or increased tuition fees will be the rule of the day. Third, it could mean simply go and collect more taxes from the people in the provinces or add to the deficit of the provincial coffers. Any way you cut it, it is already bad news for provinces that with very few exceptions are hard pressed.

When you see the federal Government backing off from its commitment of 50-50 funding, it is particularly problematic in certain provinces. One of these provinces is British Columbia. The universities I suspect pointed out to all Members of Parliament that when you examine who it is that funds post-secondary education in the Province of British Columbia, it is the federal Government at 100 per cent.

• (2150)

The Province of British Columbia funds none of its post-secondary education. When the federal Government says that it is cutting back on its contribution, it is not a contribution but the sole provision of investment in post-secondary education in the Province of British Columbia. That is why some of us are particularly concerned. If we knew that the provincial Governments would make up the short-fall it would be one thing, but we are particularly alarmed because we know the attitude of the present Government in the Province of British Columbia on post-secondary education.

We are very concerned about the passage of this Bill. I notice that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce was the only witness which said this Bill was a great idea. I have always had some concerns about the progressive thinking of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. This Bill will result in less money being spent on research and development and on the training and education of young and old Canadians. I simply do not understand that anyone could think this would be in the best interests of Canada and the Canadian economy. I am afraid

the Canadian Chamber of Commerce was totally off the mark on this particular issue.

We believe that this is a very regressive piece of legislation. We believe that this Bill is anti-people and anti-youth. It discriminates against the aged and the ill. It discriminates against the regions of Canada which are away from the central heartland. For those reasons I believe that this Bill ought not be passed. I look forward to hearing my friends and colleagues across the aisle in the Conservative Party stand in their places and explain where my analysis of this Bill has been incorrect or incomplete. Perhaps they could give us reasons why it is in Canada's interest to cut back on increases to funding for the post-secondary and health care institutions of Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Are there any questions or comments? I will recognize the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps). I am sorry, the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans).

Mr. Deans: Much though I admire and respect my colleague, the Member for Hamilton East, I find it difficult to imagine that you can make such an error. I do not have nearly the leaping quality that she has.

Mr. Gauthier: Careful, careful.

Mr. Deans: My colleague raised an interesting point. I want him to elaborate on it a little bit. I understood him to say that the measures being proposed by the Government would further reduce opportunities for young people in British Columbia to advance their education as a result of the fact that the Social Credit Government in British Columbia is already contributing so little to the post-secondary education facilities. I have always wondered about this and have never received an answer.

Is the Member suggesting that by virtue of the fact that at least one Conservative Member of Parliament is running for the leadership of the Social Credit Party, the difference between the Social Credit Party and the Conservative Party is nonexistent and that they are, in fact, one and the same? Is he suggesting that the policies of the Social Credit Party in British Columbia are the policies of the Conservative Party of Canada and that the policies of the Conservative Party of Canada are the policies of the Social Credit Party of British Columbia? Is he suggesting that by virtue of those two very close relationships, if you vote So-Cred in B.C. you are in fact voting for the Tory policy of the federal Conservative Party?

Mr. Benjamin: The answer is yes.

Mr. Riis: It is not difficult to answer that question, Mr. Speaker. I think my friend from Hamilton Mountain has summed it up admirably. A Conservative Member of Parliament who has been a member of this House for many, many years is running for the leadership of the Social Credit Party.

Mr. Deans: He used to be a So-Cred.