

motion. In his text the hon. member for Egmont says the following:

Although the amending formula in this motion does not necessarily reflect either my personal or my party's position on an appropriate formula, unanimity among the eleven governments would be the most desirable—and effective—approach here.

I presume by that he means that on an over-all basis he would not adopt a formula such as this, and I see him nodding his agreement. In that case I wonder why he would adopt it in a matter of this kind.

As the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. McIsaac) has pointed out, there has not been general agreement among the provinces with respect to the desirable goal of regional economic expansion and equality of opportunity for everyone, and even if this were to be one case in which all the provinces could agree, I think the hon. member must realize that following a certain procedure in one case involving the constitution would establish some kind of precedent which it would be very hard not to follow in future times. It would certainly exert, if not a binding effect, at least a persuasive effect on what would happen subsequently.

There are two problems, as I see it, with the proposal here. The first is really an entirely novel proposal. I do not know why the hon. member chose to put it in this way, but he proposes that the Parliament of the United Kingdom not act until it has received a formal request from the legislatures and governments of the provinces. I just do not understand why the English parliament would proceed in that way. Surely it would be enough for this House to canvass the support which the provincial governments are giving, and for this House then to indicate, in the usual form of address to the Parliament of the United Kingdom, that it desires the act to be amended. Even if we were to go along with everything else in this, I cannot see any reason why we would adopt a procedure such as the hon. member suggests. It would depart entirely from the precedents. It would put the provinces in the position of dealing directly with the British parliament, which has never been the case.

The premier of Quebec some years ago tried to lobby—personally, I believe—the British parliament, and he simply was not heeded. This has been the unbroken tradition, and I do not see any reason why we would depart from that part of the procedure which we have adopted in the past.

The other aspect is with respect to whether unanimous consent should be required at all, whether that unanimous consent is expressed through this House or, as the hon. member for Egmont has suggested, whether it be expressed directly by the provinces to the British parliament. Should there even be a requirement of unanimous consent? Well, like the hon. member for Greenwood, I was not greatly enamoured of the original Fulton formula in which there was to be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. The hour appointed for the consideration of private members' business having expired, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock p.m.

At 5.56 p.m. the House took recess.

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FINANCING ACT, 1977

MEASURE FOR MAKING CERTAIN FISCAL PAYMENTS AND OF
ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FINANCING CONTRIBUTIONS TO
PROVINCES, ETC.

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale) that Bill C-37, to provide for the making of certain fiscal payments and of established programs financing contributions to provinces, to provide for payments in respect of certain provincial taxes and fees, and to make consequential and related amendments, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): May I say, for the information of hon. members who may not have had the benefit of my comments before five o'clock, that I will offer some more now.

As I said when introducing my notice of motion at the start of private members' hour, there seemed to be some providence in discussing that motion with respect to the entrenching of an amendment to the BNA Act concerning regional disparities and the over-all debate we are having today on Bill C-37 on fiscal equalization. It is providential, perhaps for me particularly, that I have an opportunity this evening to deal more specifically with the substantial bill before us, substantial both in terms of the money that is being allocated here as well as in terms of the major program with which it deals. We are creating a structure within which the provinces and the federal government will have to live during the course of the next five years, dealing with a number of basic social programs in the area of health and education in particular and, in general advancing revenues for the maintenance of equitable social programs from coast to coast.

Hon. members have taken already some opportunities to deal with the basic background to this debate in terms of where we stand with regard to the federal system. Comments have already been made with respect to the shape of negotiations that have led up to the agreement reached last December and the approach of this government to federalism.

Certainly I agree with my colleague, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald), when she said this afternoon that the profile of combative federalism which has characterized the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and, I am sorry to say, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald), has not been helpful to the country, and while the Minister of