

*Government Orders*

I want to get the reaction of the member for Brant on some information released yesterday by the Canadian Life and Health Insurances Association of Canada, which voiced some concern about federal taxation of group health and dental insurance.

The information put forward yesterday was to the effect that the government is seriously considering taxing group health insurance and dental insurance. This insurance is paid by employers in a lot of instances for about nine million working Canadians. It benefits about 20 million Canadians, I understand, according to the information, families across this country who receive these benefits.

My understanding is that this would be a pretty important tax grab. The association has offered some numbers from its research. It indicates that for a worker who has no dependents earning \$25,000 per year the impact of this tax measure would be about \$275 a year in additional income tax. It goes on to say that a family with one bread winner who earns about \$40,000 a year would pay \$425 in additional income tax on the same taxable benefit.

I will just finish the quote: "For a two income household with \$80,000 a year it would be \$700 more in additional taxes a year". That is a pretty big increase, even for retired people.

My question for the member for Brant is the following. If there is going to be a debate in this country about health insurance and how we apply it, and I understand that is what the government intends to do, would it not make more sense to have the people and employers involved in the industry participate in that debate before such a dramatic tax grab takes place that will affect 20 million people and nine million working men and women?

**Mrs. Stewart (Brant):** Mr. Speaker, I do not pretend to speak on behalf of the Minister of Finance. I cannot say that is going to be part of the budget. I will only reiterate his comments that he will develop a fair and equitable budget. I have every confidence in his ability and his commitment to do that.

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**MOTION TO EXTEND HOURS OF SITTING**

**Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt the proceedings, but I think you will find there is unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That the ordinary hour of daily adjournment be extended to 10 p.m. this day and that during the extended sitting no quorum calls or dilatory motions shall be received by the Chair.

(Motion agreed to.)

**PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin my first speech as a member of Parliament, may I first congratulate you on attaining your important position of responsibility. I assure you of my full support and co-operation as we strive to do the people's business in a more orderly and decorous manner.

● (1645)

No doubt everyone will understand that my first thoughts are of my wife, Evelyn and our three children, Mark, Laura and Carl. During my 13 years of service as an elected representative in the municipal government of London, Ontario and now as the member of Parliament for London—Middlesex, I have always enjoyed their full love and support. I wish to thank them most sincerely.

As you well know, Mr. Speaker, the adventure of democratic politics is never a solo flight for no one achieves public office without the help of many people: family, friends and acquaintances alike. I wish to thank publicly in this House the army of dedicated volunteers who worked so indefatigably on my campaign and whose efforts produced the most decisive victory ever in the history of the riding of London—Middlesex.

To all of the people of our riding, to the 54 per cent who did support me and to those who did not: I pledge to you my very best efforts to represent you at all times with honesty, integrity and hard work. I am indeed honoured to be your member of Parliament in this the 35th Parliament of Canada.

My riding is most definitely a challenge to represent given its geographic size and the diverse heritage of its peoples. Indeed, in many respects it is almost a microcosm of Canada itself. Eighty per cent of our people live in the urban areas of east and south London, while the remaining 20 per cent make their homes in the very productive rural and agricultural settings of the four townships of Biddulph, London, West Nissouri and North Dorchester.

Demographically, London—Middlesex is an interesting riding encompassing peoples of many cultures, languages and religions. Although primarily of a sturdy Anglo-Saxon character, it is home to such fascinating peoples as the many descendants of the historic Irish pioneers. After World War II many Dutch, Italian and Portuguese immigrants came to our area and worked very hard for a better life. Most recently, significant numbers of Arabs and Poles, as well as Croats, Caribbeans, Southeast Asians, East Indians and Chinese have all made their important contributions to our communities.