

*Supply*

The Ontario government has had a greater reduction in federal social assistance payments than eight other of the provinces. Eight of them have been held at 50 per cent as the federal share, but Ontario has been cut to 31 per cent by the federal government. The only other one that has been cut below 50 per cent so far has been British Columbia. We have yet to hear from British Columbia.

Ontario has been cut by a very large amount of money by the federal government in some of the programs on which the Ontario government relies. That is the reason for the lay-offs.

**Mr. Tobin:** Question.

**Mr. Heap:** It would be the reason for the lay-offs in any other province as well.

I ask the hon. member, since he has been interrupting me with comments, to stand and explain the action of the premier of Newfoundland in his statements regarding fee for service, his statements suggesting that there should be better health care if the so-called rich were asked to pay more but without defining how far down the rich would go to introduce the idea of fee for service, or if any kind of payment other than out of the public purse for health care would endanger the health care for the large majority of people in Newfoundland as well as the large majority in Ontario.

I ask the hon. member to tell us where his premier stands.

• (1140)

**Mr. Tobin:** Madam Speaker, the member says I was interrupting him. Indeed I did, to say to him: "Where is the quote?" He is telling us what Premier Wells allegedly has said. I tell the member, given that he is going to stand and put words in the premier's mouth, that he ought to have the care, the consideration and the veracity, which means conviction to express the truth, to tell us what Mr. Wells said, to quote directly from him. The member conveniently did not hear me. It is not surprising he did not hear me because he is not representing accurately, truthfully or correctly what is being said by some premiers in this province and in this country.

What are premiers saying? Premiers are saying that if you continue to cut unilaterally and arbitrarily hundreds of millions of dollars from the health care budget, if you are operating hospitals and health care facilities on the assumption that money is being transferred and suddenly large junks of that money are no longer being transferred, you borrow some more if you have the capacity to borrow. Newfoundland does not have that capacity. Ontario might, I do not know, but it is fast losing it. Alberta and British Columbia might, but Newfoundland does not have that capacity to borrow.

What do the premiers say? The premiers said: "If I am not able to borrow, I either have to make cuts or I have to consider bringing in additional revenue". That is what the premier said. The premier did not say it was the policy of the government to bring in user fees. The premier did not say he was going to announce user fees. The premier said: "This is what the health care system is being driven to". It was a cry of alarm.

The member for St. John's East who is across the way knows that his city has seen dramatic cutbacks in the health care service. His province is currently undergoing an advertising campaign by the nurses talking about the quality of health care in Newfoundland and Labrador. The same is happening in New Brunswick because nurses themselves who are the primary caregivers are seeing that the health care system is sick.

What is equally worrisome, and I say with great respect perhaps equally sick in the context of how my colleague is thinking, is when he says that it is the policy of the New Democratic Party that cutbacks and lay-offs in the health care system of and by themselves are not an attack on universality.

Let me make clear to the member that the Liberal Party of Canada, the Liberal Party as represented in this House of Commons, the Liberal Party as represented by the leader of our party who went to Washington and defended Canadian health care, believes that these unilateral cuts in transfer payments to health care are an attack on universality. We are not prepared to play little semantic games. We understand that the reason that cutbacks are happening in every province, be they Liberal, NDP or Conservative, the reason people are being laid off and the reason the quality of health care is being reduced is the cuts to transfer payments.