

vation sites belong to the people and must be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

• (1415)

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, many amazing and wonderful, in fact weird things are happening during the current Tory leadership convention.

Ministers who have sat in the cabinet for an entire term are repudiating this government's fiscal strategy which was laid out in last week's budget. The Minister of the Environment and the Minister of National Defence are competing to see who can come up with the wildest plan to repudiate the Minister of Finance.

The Canadian public should look closely at these plans. They tell us a lot about the values and priorities of these aspiring Tory leaders. Let us look at the plan advanced by the hon. Minister of National Defence. She has a plan that would balance the federal budget, among other things, by imposing user fees on people who are sick and in need of medical care. No matter what our income, the hon. minister feels we should pay an extra fee to get access to the health care system we are already paying for through our taxes.

She is dead wrong. A new tax on the health care system will not cut health care costs. The only thing user fees do is make health care harder to get at for poor people. If the minister of defence is really interested in containing health care costs, she should begin by looking at pharmaceutical prices which are going through the roof in large part because of policies of the cabinet in which she sits.

Canadians will not forget this change of Tory policy.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

HEALTH CARE

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

Some two years ago in this House we had a vote on the universality of medicare, and said that free medicare was for everybody with no user fees. Over the weekend the Minister of National Defence said that she intends to have user fees for medicare.

I would like to know from the Deputy Prime Minister if there is a change in the policy of the government or if the government is still of the same view as expressed many, many times by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, that the policy of the government is to have free medicare for everybody and refuses to bend under pressure to have user fees.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the policy of the government is very clear. It has been enunciated by the Minister of National Health and Welfare and other ministers on many occasions.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows very well that this is an issue that is generating public debate because there are cost pressures.

Mr. Fontana: The only debate is on that side.

Mr. Mazankowski: The hon. member suggests that the debate is only on this side. This is an issue that finance ministers have been discussing. This is an issue that health ministers have been discussing. This is an issue that health and finance ministers have been discussing together. It is quite clear that the objective here is to try to provide health services to Canadians consistent with the principles that are outlined in the Canada Health Act.

What we are trying to do is to look at ways and means to contain costs, and we are doing that in a co-operative fashion, with the provinces and the federal government working in concert with the health sector.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, does the Deputy Prime Minister intend to ensure that the candidates for the leadership of his party do not create confusion about this? Because the Minister of the Environment made the same statement about universality a few weeks ago and everyone knows that is the only program now which remain universal, because the Conservative government has taken universality away from all the other programs.