

you that in the next election campaign this will become an historic document.

With regard to the question of my hon. friend, there has been no change whatsoever in government policy nor do we contemplate one.

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THE FAMILY

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. He will be happy to know that for clarity and clarification, when the Prime Minister reads that transcript very carefully, our leader says not once, not twice but seven times, no to user fees.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. He will know that the National Forum on Family Security severely condemned the government yesterday for having absolutely no strategy to deal with the plight of families. He will also know that Statistics Canada released yesterday the fact that for the average single parent family headed by a woman, the average income after taxes is \$19,000. It has dropped \$2,000 in real terms in the last decade.

When will the government, after nine years of doing absolutely nothing to help the family, recognize the dilemma it has created and begin to act with a coherent social and economic plan to help Canadian families?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows full well that, for example, with regard to the tax changes and government initiatives to help children and low income families, the government and the minister of health have moved in a very significant way. I think my hon. friend from time to time has had the occasion to compliment the minister on the nature of some of those policies.

While everything is not perfect, there have been some significant and important changes—as the University of Chicago study reveals—in favour of families and in favour of giving more equality of opportunity to low income families.

Oral Questions

My hon. friend says that we have misunderstood or distorted the transcript in regard to this very important question about user fees and poor families. It is very important for poor families.

The question from Mr. Duffy to Mr. Chrétien was: “Will you allow the provinces as Prime Minister to have some form of user fees? Chrétien: There it depends on what they want to do”.

Next question: “You are saying you don’t want them? Are you saying as Prime Minister you would not allow them? Chrétien: “I don’t intend to allow them.” Aha.

Question No. 3: “Mr. Duffy: You won’t say as Prime Minister ‘I will not allow user fees’. Chrétien: I don’t want to have user fees, but the real problem—I don’t want to have them but the real problem is nobody has defined exactly what they are”.

People have defined exactly what they are, and you had better make up your mind whether you are for or you are against. That is the issue.

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister. This party would be very happy to start the campaign on the question of medicare. For 26 years this party has stood up and defended the principle of universality.

I would like to remind the Prime Minister when he checks yesterday’s *Hansard* he will find that his minister sitting beside him refused to defend medicare as a sacred trust. Read it.

My supplementary question is this. Every member in the House has received phone calls from constituents who have lost their jobs, who have lost their homes, who are in a near panic about the economic plight they are in. Yet last week the budget made absolutely no mention at all of the economic plight of Canadian families.

I ask the Prime Minister again, when is the government going to put together a plan to help Canadian families survive their economic strife?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows full well that the delivery of these programs is already in train and is beginning to have—after a difficult recession it is true—beneficial effects.