

Government Orders

It does not matter whether we are talking about communities such as Windsor or my own in Winnipeg, or some other communities represented on the other side of the House, Toronto, Prince Edward Island, there will be people who are running out of UI. This government today, in continuing to press for the conclusion of this legislation and seeing it through the House, has again refused to recognize the devastating effects that UI changes are having on Canadians.

Again taxes are being increased through the back door without providing any benefits to the people who are desperately in need. Furthermore, changes to the training component has completely undermined the organization of training among social groups in this country. It is a total abrogation of responsibility for which Canadians are going to hold this government accountable.

In conclusion, I would like to introduce an amendment:

I move:

That the motion be amended by striking out all of the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

Bill C-20, an act to amend certain statutes to implement the budget tabled in Parliament on February 26, 1991, be not now read a third time, but that the said bill be referred back to the Standing Committee on Finance for reconsideration of Clauses 2, 3, 4 and 8.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The Speaker will check to see if the motion is in order.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, let me first say that the speeches which have been contributed to this debate by both the minister at the start of the debate and by the health critic from the Liberal Party, the member for Winnipeg, are good statements of their political positions. I congratulate both of them for putting those positions well and for putting them with a sense of sincerity and a clearly strong belief they both feel within those positions.

I just want to mention briefly, before moving into my speech, the point made by the health critic from the Liberal Party. I think it is very important for us to deal in the real world in this House. Part of dealing in the real world is to recognize that sometimes provinces will seek to escape obligations which exist under the Canada Health Act. There must be some clear commitment on the part, not of this government which is temporarily in

office now, but on the part of Parliament which will adopt or reject this legislation. There must be a clear commitment, a clear signal to all provinces that the Canada Health Act is central to what constitutes our vision of Canada. The accessibility to that system, the portability, the fairness with which that system operates is so crucial that there must be a strong commitment to financial penalties if a province chooses to reject commitments to the Canada Health Act.

• (1700)

The representative from the Liberal Party has suggested that section 4 provides some such penalties. Our view as a party is not necessarily that these are the best protections or that these are the best kinds of penalties to establish.

Within the Canada Health Act as it presently stands there is the capacity to impose certain penalties. It is an act incidentally which was passed by the Liberal Party.

I want to quote to the House from the Canadian Public Health Association which to my mind gave one of the strongest briefs to the finance committee looking at Bill C-20. They said very clearly:

We support clause 4 which reinforces the federal government's role in maintaining fiscal and legislative mechanisms to achieve compliance with national health care standards.

That is what is at the heart of our concern with this entire piece of legislation which is in front of us. We have here something which is fundamentally an attack on the future of the medical care system in this country. It is a system which Canadians across this country are proud of, believe in and want to see survive.

It is an attack as well on the security of funding for the post-secondary education system in this country. It is an attack on small business and on workers in the extra fees imposed for unemployment insurance which are put into place.

Over all it represents not a serious effort to deal with the deficit problem in this country. Instead it is a mechanism by which the deficit problem is transferred to the provinces. It is a mechanism by which the provinces are faced with having to pay the bills which federal governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have failed to pay for the past 15 years in Canada. For that reason our party strongly opposes this piece of legislation.