

*Medicare*

say about our present political situation in Canada. As we move ever increasingly into the welfare state, we seem to be running into sharp conflict as to just who composes the elite of this welfare state.

I should like to quote a bit from this—

**Mr. Winch:** Who is the author?

**Mr. Johnston:** The author is Piet Thoenes, a Dutch sociologist. The book is available from the parliamentary library. I quote:

It is a characteristic of the elite that its superiority imposes a task upon it. This task, either as a right or as a duty, includes that of determining the destiny of others. By accepting this task, every elite takes upon itself a certain burden of responsibility. Hence the selection of the ruling authority on which this responsibility is to be laid determines its character.

An elite, however, does not consider itself obliged to be answerable to its actual or future subjects. Indeed it has not received its commission from these people—

I believe this statement is true of the New Democratic Party who have never been given a commission from the people of Canada on a national basis.

**Mr. Scott (Danforth):** Neither have you.

**Mr. Johnston:** I have not complained about that at all. I continue quoting:

—but this does not imply that it has, on this account, no sort of responsibility; it simply means that the elite seeks its responsibility from some other source, from the place from which it supposes itself to have received its commission. In abstract, this means that it will justify its actions by calling on an idea, a divine message, or a scientific law—a biological, psychological, economic or sociological law—or even a system combining a number of these elements.

This is one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, that we have had so many references to history and why, at the opening of this debate, the spokesman for the New Democratic Party referred to this as being such a historic moment or he had hoped it would be but was afraid it would not be the historical moment that he had expected. It is important that a very heavy gloss of history be laid over this debate. I continue quoting:

In practice this means that it seeks a blessing on its ideas from an ecclesiastical or scientific authority, either one which is already in being, or else one which the elite itself has brought into existence.

From what sources of inspiration, from what divine promptings or scientific laws have certain groups been able to derive their claim to be set in the position of the elect? Although some elites imagine themselves to have been commissioned by a higher authority—sent down from on high—nevertheless the sociological observer finds that in

actual fact they have never fallen from heaven. There has always been a concrete social situation which has resulted in their being called into the existence as a group.

Later the author goes on to state:

Generally speaking, elites as groups are not born easily. It is true to say that it is always flattering to human vanity to know oneself to be a member of an upper set; yet on the one hand, to cut oneself adrift from the greater, original whole and on the other to run the risk of failing to bring it off satisfactorily, demands of the people concerned a truly exceptional amount of courage—or, if one prefers it, of pride.

I have one more short quotation:

Now, if a group sets itself up as an elite under favourable conditions, then generally speaking it will need a different source of inspiration. The greater the difficulties in the way of acceptance of an elite, the more irrefutable a claim and an inspiration it has to have. The more revolutionary the character of its emergence (owing to the requirements of its situation) the more will it attempt to surround its message with a gloss of inevitability, of absoluteness and incontrovertibility. A group in this sort of situation quite easily comes to confer upon its message the nature of a revelation.

Certainly we have the revelation, I suppose you would call it, in the Hall report. This report has been treated as absolutely divine writ which must be accepted without argument and must be implemented completely by the government of the day without alteration of any kind. In all of this, Mr. Speaker, the thing I find most surprising is that the government is always allowing itself to be pushed into a position where it seems to lose its own claim to being the elite in the welfare state. It has seemed so willing to hand its position over to the New Democratic Party without really any sound ground for so doing.

The book from which I am quoting has a sentence which applies to the government:

On the other hand, a group which moves in a situation of stimulating change can carry on in a somewhat calmer fashion.

I think the government has been wise in its decision to delay the implementation of medicare for a year. I feel it might have carried on in a somewhat calmer fashion and delayed the legislation as well. There is really no sound reason why we should be involved in this debate at the present time. The government is in charge and has been given a sort of mandate from the Canadian people. It should not always put itself in the position of being pushed into a series of panic reactions, fearful that somehow it may lose a particular position.