

We can have deterrent fees, or we can have increased premiums for medicare, or provinces can choose the third route, that is, to cut back on services. Of course that is the most arbitrary and cruel method of all. We have had a foretaste of that in my province of Ontario where the government, faced with escalating costs, rather than initiate a study to look at ways of becoming more efficient, to look at ways of taking people out of expensive regular hospital beds and putting them in out-patient clinics, arbitrarily decided that it would close down small community hospitals or reduce the number of beds available in larger urban hospitals as a means of saving money in its health care system. This was done in Ontario before the passing of this bill and the change in the funding formula. If we see the province under that kind of pressure at this stage, how much more drastic will those cut-backs be a few years down the road when the effects of this act come into force?

Again I say this Liberal government is undoing what the provincial governments, especially in Saskatchewan, have struggled to achieve for so many years. But there is a way around the arbitrary cut-back and change of the federal funding formula. This government can be a leader in promoting preventive medicine if it wanted to, in developing programs that could be a model for provincial governments to follow, and in improving the standard of health of Canadians across the country. But we only see tokenism on the part of the federal government when it comes to initiating preventive medicine.

I refer to what has happened in a community outside my riding, nearby in northern Ontario at Elliot Lake, where the uranium mines are located, and where evidence has now come to light of serious problems among the miners due to silicosis because of the lack of federal leadership. It is a mine which comes under the control of the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada, a federal agency. I am referring to the lack of leadership of the government in ensuring that proper safety and environmental standards are adhered to in that mine.

If the federal government is serious about demonstrating its commitment to preventive medicine, why has it not revised and upgraded the standards of health and environment in uranium mines across this country? Elliot Lake is now undergoing a tremendous expansion. The steelworkers' union there has submitted proposals to the Atomic Energy Control Board outlining its concerns about the same kind of environmental mistakes and health hazards being repeated because the company, in its expansion, is not required to put in adequate and proper ventilation systems, to recycle polluted water, and to bury contaminated waste.

We see growing evidence of industrial cancers across the land in many occupations, not only in uranium mining but in asbestos plants and in work places where dust is high. Dr. Selikoff, a renowned American doctor, has documented this in case studies. He states that as little as two weeks' exposure to high dust levels in asbestos plants and certain other mines, even for people conducting roofing with hot tar, can lead to the development of cancers some 20 years later after the dormant period takes place. Yet we do not have national standards, proper environmental standards in the work place, nor do we have a government which seems to be serious about the proliferation of alcohol and

Medical Care Act

tobacco advertising, which creates a demand for these products which have been shown to lead to great health problems throughout the country.

The incidence of lung cancer and alcoholism is growing, and yet the federal government still allows advertisers of these products to deduct the costs of advertising for income tax purposes. If this government were serious about reducing the incidence of lung cancer and alcoholism, it could easily amend the Income Tax Act to make it less attractive for these industries to carry out the kind of advertising that promotes excessive consumption of these items.

If this government were serious about reducing health care costs, it would not be cutting back its funding of medical research programs. Example after example can be shown of this Liberal government's policy saying "Do as I say, not as I do." It has not demonstrated its serious commitment to preventive medicine. It has taken the easier route of arbitrarily reneging on the solemn commitment that it has to medicare and sloughing off the burden on to the provinces, which of course have less room in which to manoeuvre so far as revenue is concerned.

I say again and again that this bill is a backward, regressive step. All Canadians will suffer as a result. We will have a lower standard of health care. We will have a system of health care that becomes increasingly geared to one's ability to pay rather than to the fact that one is a citizen of Canada and, as such, deserves adequate and affordable health care. I think this is a regressive and backward bill, as I said, and I wish that some of the Liberal backbenchers who represent constituents from different parts of the country would be honest enough to admit to them that a few years down the road they will suffer because their Liberal majority will force this inequitous piece of legislation through the House.

● (1540)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been some discussions among the House leaders