

*The Budget—Mr. A. Lambert*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. The hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) is raising a point of order.

**Mr. Béchard:** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) allow me a question?

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** Certainly.

**Mr. Béchard:** Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his remarks the hon. member for Bellechasse referred to the total debt of Canada and said: Do we have a navy? Do we have this or that? The hon. member for Bellechasse knows the answer to those questions but is he aware that all Canadians, among other benefits, receive free medical care? Does he consider the health of the Canadian people as a national debt?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** The hon. member for Bellechasse has the floor.

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** That's a very good question, but that's not the area which gets us in the red.

**Miss Bégin:** We'll come to it.

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) says that we'll come to it. I am looking forward to discussing it. After all, that is what parliament is all about. That's why we are here. We are here as members of parliament, as representatives of our constituents to deal with their problems. If, hon. members on the other side are able to justify such spendings, good for them, but it will take a lot of efforts on their part to convince me because if we really tried, if we were serious about our responsibilities, if we did our job, things would be different. We are under the control of monetary powers, and while we run into debt, while we make hundreds of thousands of unemployed, the financial institutions get richer. They have made record profits since 1967. Has this been considered?

● (1542)

The hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) made a comment. He asked me a question to which I would like to reply very seriously. I know that the federal government shares the responsibility for public health with the provinces. It is not in this area that we have serious problems. I would like to have truly meaningful figures. Let us be serious. In 1977-78, servicing the debt, or the interest that we must pay, cost \$5,425 million, and in the present budget it amounts to \$6,650 million, or an increase of \$1,225 million. The interests on this debt do not go mostly to Canadians. Foreign interests own \$106 billion of our debt and they are the ones who get the interests, even though we could make other arrangements. There is no risk in trying. Some may say that if we change our public financing system, perhaps the Americans, the Italians or the Germans will not like it, since they are

[Mr. Béchard.]

the major source of our borrowing. I cannot understand how a country like Germany, which suffered complete defeat in two world wars, can lend us money 30 years later. We are indebted towards Germany. The victor is indebted towards the vanquished. Such a situation is unthinkable.

What do we suggest? It is not enough to criticize, we must also suggest alternatives. Answers have been found elsewhere. The June 28, 1977 issue of *Le Devoir*, people also think about finance elsewhere, refers to interest-free bank loans with charges limited to administration costs. This has been done. This article says:

The bank charges its borrowers only its own costs. It is a commercial business like any other which is trying to prove that it is possible to increase its capital without charging interests. Loans of more than \$63 million have been granted to Turkey, Algeria, Jordania, Sudan, Bangladesh and Somalia.

Good heavens, if that is possible over there. I recently heard the Prime Minister say in reply to a question put by the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette), that if you can find us a lender who will lend us money without interest, we are certainly prepared to administer the country that way. Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister is much smarter than that. He knows the financial side of things from A to Z. He knows it very well, but he feels incapable of letting go.

That is why it is our duty, and your duty on the government side, on the side of the majority, to do your utmost to advise the Prime Minister, so that he finally decides to table the bank act, which we have been waiting for two years. You know it on the other side, you are well aware of it. Mr. Speaker, this act which should be before parliament and which we should consider and pass after amending it by removing section 72, which gives the banking system—I am not speaking of individuals, but of the system—which gives the banking system, the power to cash in on the credit of the people, a credit which is created by individuals, by Canadians and not by banks, to cash in on the credit of the people through private institutions to get the country into debt, to get the public sector into debt, that, in my view, is criminal. Our credit should be cashed in by—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but I must inform him that his time has expired.

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, if I have correctly understood the speeches and remarks of the two parties of the opposition I have heard so far during the budget debate, Canadians did and won almost nothing in the last decade, or even over the last fifty years and the government did nothing for Canadians that is any good. As far as I can see, it seems all our social programs are worthless, and I have reached the stage when I should have liked to hear the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) talk about them, but he got lost in his monetary theory which unfortunately did not enlighten us—