

If an individual here needs health care should we wait for New Zealand? I suppose that is the answer. Monumental waiting lists will be the legacy of a government that will not pay attention to our debt.

I had a young student face me not so long ago and say to me: "You are so hard-hearted. All you care about are finances". All I care about is a health care system that will survive. If we go New Zealand's route and I say to my grandchild that everything is fine, my grandchild will say to me, "You are not a good granddad".

Health care will not survive with a government that does not pay attention to its debt. I will not allow that to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Because the last speaker's time ran over by five minutes on questions and comments I will allow one comment and one question in response.

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was somewhat surprised by the comments of the Reform member, especially when he talked about health care. Obviously the Reform Party wants to privatize health care. It is a party that has not defended social programs. We are the only party that has defended social programs in this House, in spite of the attacks and reductions by the Liberal government.

The Reform Party has not spoken in defence of social programs. It is obviously opening the door to privatization of health care. Our health care system is one of the standards of Canada, one of the hallmarks of Canada, one of the achievements of Canada. This party is talking about privatizing health care and giving us the model, obviously, of the American system where if a person gets sick he or she risks going bankrupt very quickly.

Under the cover of comments of New Zealand's problems and success story, among all the other comments that have been made, which unfortunately Americanize things that have been good for Canada, he is again opening the door to a system that has proven to be costly and wasteful and even dangerous, where people go bankrupt if they become ill.

That is not an avenue which is very constructive. It is probably even worse than what the federal government is now doing. The federal government has not been doing very much in terms of helping people, in terms of the social programs, in terms of health care. The government in trying to reduce its deficit has attacked unemployed people and senior citizens. It has tried to put more debt on students. It is now even increasing the rent of the poorest people in our society. That is what the government is doing now, which is probably the worst thing that I can imagine, and the hon. member is suggesting something which is even worse.

Supply

• (1655)

I ask the member how privatizing the health care system in Canada would improve the debt problem?

Mr. Hill (MacLeod): Madam Speaker, I will have to be brief. That was quite a discourse.

The response of the health minister in Quebec to the new proposals from the federal health minister is quite interesting to me. The health minister in Quebec said simply: "Health is a provincial responsibility. The federal government should keep its nose out of health". That is a proposal I strongly support.

Alberta, my province, says that Quebec has it right. We may disagree on whether or not there is any place in health care for a safety valve. We may disagree but surely we do not disagree that health is an important program. Surely this is not a partisan issue.

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am happy today to speak to the motion presented by my colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe. I think it is important for the official opposition to raise once again this pressing matter which the government should address, but about which it keeps on procrastinating.

The government is supposed to present its budget very soon; it was said to be in early February; but it would appear that it will not be until late February or even early March. The social reform was announced for the fall; it had been postponed until winter and now it is postponed indefinitely. In the meantime, the situation is deteriorating, the deficit and the debt are increasing.

Why is the government dragging its heels? It is dragging its heels because it knows it must take steps which are going to hurt. It is afraid to do anything which will make it the enemy of the people or which will cause the vast majority of Canadians to hate it.

In the past, we have made many suggestions on how to solve the deficit problem. We have offered numerous options to the government in order to solve this problem without raising taxes, but it refuses to listen. The solutions it favours, the only ones it is considering are those aimed at the majority of people, namely the under-privileged members of our society.

What we are proposing instead is that the government target the minority of Canadians who are more fortunate, the people and corporations which are in a position to contribute more through their taxes. However, because these corporations, these executives, these wealthy people are friends of the government, it is reluctant to tackle a job which is most urgent. It refuses to assume its responsibilities for fear of alienating those Quebecers who are about to vote, in the referendum, in favour of a flexible Canada, a flexible constitution.