

*The Address*

the Social Credit movement. The Social Credit movement raised these questions in the province of Alberta many years ago and it did not follow through with them despite three decades of government.

How can you ensure that those who are not wealthy and those who do not represent special interests and those who do not have access to fax machines can be heard as well as the people we have heard from before.

**Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Kitchener for his question. I do not think I indicated in my speech that solving the problem of representing constituents was an easy one. It is not and there is no member of my party who is confused about that.

I feel that what has happened in the past is that governments have responded to the special interest groups. They are the ones who have had the ear of government to a larger degree. Average Canadians, the ones who are paying the bills, are the ones who have not been heard from. It is incumbent on me and I believe my party members share this feeling that we must go out into our ridings with town hall meetings, meet the people, talk to the people but more importantly to listen to the people about what they have to say about what is going on in this place, what we are talking about and the decisions that are being made. That is the challenge that faces me. I am going to meet that challenge because when I go back to my riding I am going to maintain that contact with the people.

I believe that is the main factor that caused the upheaval we experienced in this House after this past election. The people who sat here had lost touch with their constituents and the result is what we have here today. We want to make sure that we do not lose that contact, that we keep in touch with the average Canadian and not be heavily influenced by those special interest groups that have captivated our ear.

• (1535)

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex):** Mr. Speaker, let me join in congratulating the hon. member for Simcoe Centre on his maiden speech and on his election to the House. He was the only member as we know to resist the Liberal juggernaut in Ontario and he is therefore extra due for congratulations.

I share one thing with the hon. member. Simcoe is the birthplace of Sir Frederick Banting and London is known as the city where he began to do his important work at the University of Western Ontario.

That leads me to my question for the hon. member. The Reform Party is very concerned with deficit reduction as indeed all members of this House are or should be. In the campaign it

became clear to me that the Reform Party proposals on the health care plan for Canada would give too much leeway to the provinces, that in fact in the name of deficit reduction it would threaten the universality of our health care program. I have yet to hear that adequately explained by a member of his party.

I give the hon. member the opportunity now and I ask through you, Mr. Speaker, how they can ensure that when provinces are given such leeway to decide what health care would be like in their provinces that does not in fact jeopardize in an insidious way the universality of the health care system of which all Canadians are so proud.

**Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his compliments on my election. I am considered the green dot in a sea of red. It was the subject of much media attention to see what this giant killer looked like. They were some shocked when they found I was only five-foot-four.

To deal with the question, health care in this country is in grave peril. Our position is that the system must be saved. Our provinces have the constitutional responsibility for health care. When we brought in health care the federal government was supporting the provinces on a 50-50 cost-sharing basis. That position has declined to the point where I think it is something like 30 per cent coming from the federal government and is heading in an even lower direction to the point where the federal government in a few years time will no longer be participating in a cost-sharing plan for health care.

By virtue of that mere fact it will end up with the provinces having that responsibility which I and my party members feel is properly their responsibility. They are the ones who are closest to the people in delivering health care. They are the ones who will ultimately answer to the voters on the job that they do in running the health care system. We think the responsibility properly belongs there.

**Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's):** Mr. Speaker, it has been a marvellous week and this kinder, gentler House is soothing. It is absolutely soothing. I am hearing rumblings among the old boys and girls that it is not like it used to be. I admit I used to love having a spar or two with John Crosbie from St. John's West and we are going to miss fellows like Crosbie, but we are also going to miss people like Bernie Valcourt and Michael Wilson. You know there are some things you do not mind missing.

I am proud to stand as I have done either here or in the legislature in St. John's for the past 20 years and represent the people of the south coast of Newfoundland and since 1988 a chunk of the west coast of Newfoundland as well with the expansion of the riding that is now Burin—St. George's.