the country, without even allowing the possibility of a committee of eminent persons to review the destructive impact of this bill.

We know that the bill will gut the Canada assistance plan of its national standards. This will open the door to workfare and cheap labour standards. We know as well that it will dramatically cut funding for post–secondary education.

It is in the area of health care and medicare that I want to raise a couple of very grave concerns as well. The implications of this government's policies in the area of health care are very serious, the implications of Bill C–76. There is no doubt that we are going to see the possibility of a massive erosion in the quality of health care. We will see two tier health care. It is a direct consequence of the North American free trade agreement. We know that once the provincial governments move to de–insure any medical services it is open season for private insurance companies. Under NAFTA this is considered to be a market commodity. That is why the private insurance companies are just waiting to get in and make money.

This legislation is enormously destructive for the social fabric of the country. It was the member for Notre–Dame–de–Grâce who said that these cuts will cause considerable harm and pain to a segment of the population that has already been hit very hard. He said: "The cuts are not only wrong in principle, but contrary to what we said in the red book, contrary to what we did during nine years in opposition, and completely junking all of the principles we stood for".

I call on the government to reinstate the funding for the community action program for children. I call on the government to reverse Bill C–76, to recognize that the United Nations committee on economic, social and cultural Rights has been very critical of this legislation and recognized that we are in breach of our international obligations under the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights.

There are alternatives. The Prime Minister has suggested that medicare was only intended to be temporary in terms of federal involvement. He said it was only intended for catastrophic illness. Well it is time for this government to look at alternatives. It is time they rescind Bill C–91, which was a gift to multinational drug companies. It is time they implement the 1995 alternative federal budget, which was a very different approach. It is time in the area of health care that we place far more resources into preventative health care, as was recommended by the Canada health coalition, the Hospital Employees Union in British Columbia, the National Federation of Nurses Unions, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Labour Congress, and many others.

It is time that this government came to its senses and recognized that the impact of Bill C–76 and of its budget and budgetary policies is to shred the social safety net, is to mean that poor kids are going to get even poorer, that the gap between rich and poor will be greater, and that our health care system, the Canada assistance plan, and post–secondary education will all come under attack.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the member for Burnaby—Kingsway's question of March 15, and not really the last gospel that we just heard recited.

Children continue to be a priority for the Government of Canada, especially those who currently live in conditions of risk and poverty. As the House is aware, given the fiscal realities that all Canadians face, the federal government has had to make some very difficult choices.

The budget for the community action program for children, CAPC, has not been reduced dramatically and is still quite substantial. In the next two years over $92 million will be available through the community action program for children.

Let me assure the hon. member that the reduction to the community action program for children was applied in an equitable manner. All jurisdictions, including British Columbia, will continue to receive the percentage of total CAPC funds originally agreed to in the respective protocols signed with all provinces and territories.

• (1835)

The community action program for children remains a model of how different levels of government can work together with community groups to address the health and social needs of at risk children.

In addition to the children's action program, the government is making significant investments in new programs. For instance, the aboriginal head start and the Canada prenatal nutrition programs also address the social and health needs of children at risk and their families.

As stated in the red book, we must give our children the best possible start in life. Investing resources in our children is investing in the future of our country.

[*Translation*]

AGUSTA

Mr. Jean–Paul Marchand (Québec–Est, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have another instance of lobbying, patronage, and maybe corruption with the Agusta affair involving an Italian firm, Agusta S.p.A., a manufacturer for the EH–101 helicopter contract which was cancelled and for which there was to be no compensation.

The present Prime Minister said that there would be no compensation. And I quote: