

The Address—Mr. Epp

With those revelations in sight the Liberals have vowed to make amends. A fitting penance, in my view, would be banishment to political oblivion as judgment day approaches for that entire lot. Among their biggest crimes in my mind and in the minds of many Canadians is their use of medicare as a political football. Much to their chagrin, no one has taken them up on their dare to kick that football or reacted to their taunts designed to draw somebody offside so that they can pick up that football and run to an election with it. Their major concern is not medicare, it is what I quoted earlier, to stay in power indefinitely. This is one of the vehicles they want to use.

The reason no one has kicked that football or gone offside is that all Canadians support medicare. Certainly everyone in the Progressive Conservative Party supports medicare and will continue to support it. Make no mistake about that, Mr. Speaker. It was this Party while in government in 1979—and I could go back to the period of the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker as well—that commissioned the father of medicare, Mr. Justice Emmett Hall, to undertake a review to ensure that it was sound. In his report Mr. Justice Hall indicated that he had, and I quote:

—found no one, not any Government or individual, not the Medicare profession nor any organization not in favour of Medicare.

That group includes the progressive Conservative Party and nothing has changed, absolutely nothing.

The Throne Speech failed to make an important distinction which needs to be made for parliamentarians and the general public and that is that medicare on the one hand and the Liberals' proposed health care Act, which I hope comes in today, on the other, are two entirely separate things. They are not, I repeat, one and the same. I will explain that. If we keep this distinction in mind then we will have a more reasoned analysis of what the Government's proposed legislation might contain and how it can be improved without the hysteria and fear that the Minister of National Health and Welfare has tried to generate. She has already spent nearly a quarter of a million dollars trying to convince Canadians that a crisis exists. Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to look at her own polls which show that there are a number of issues well ahead of that concern. I say to Hon. Members opposite that from our perspective medicare is good; medicare must be kept; medicare must be fostered and it must be enhanced.

If the Liberals' proposed Health Care Act contains provisions that maintain and foster medicare, we will be the first to support it, along with others in the House. We, along with millions of Canadians, have been anxious to see that legislation and I understand that it will be brought in later this day.

In the past several months provincial ministers have requested that federal representatives meet with them to discuss this issue. The Government has steadfastly refused and I will give you one example of this. There was a meeting of health ministers in Halifax in September. The Minister did not go there to consult, she went there to insult, Mr. Speaker. That is a strategy which she is still following, today. Then, in self-righteous indignation she huffed back to Ottawa proclaiming in this House that "the meeting was quite a waste of time".

Indeed, if it was a waste of time that was due to her continued unwillingness to listen. That indeed has wasted a lot of good time.

The provinces wanted to discuss underfunding and they wanted to talk about medicare. The Minister told them that she was not going to discuss the funding side of medicare. We have seen the Minister of National Health and Welfare running around the country like a cannon that has lost its moorings on the deck. She is going hither and yon, shooting here and shooting there, but about all she is doing is hitting herself in the foot.

The unwillingness to act among Ministers in the Government probably stems in part from the Prime Minister's conviction, which he stated earlier this year, that co-operative federalism is dead. If it is dead, Mr. Speaker, Canadians know who killed it. In the Throne Speech the Government proclaims that it wants to resuscitate the corpse. In the Throne Speech we read that the Government intends to introduce more permanent mechanisms of consultation. Is it the mechanism or the attitude of this cast of actors at the federal level that has failed in the past? I put it to you and to all Canadians, Mr. Speaker, that it is the latter. No amount of new mechanisms can change that. What is needed is a change of personalities that have the trust and confidence of the Canadian people and who understand co-operative federalism.

Even in the Throne Speech the Government has found it hard to be honest with Canadians. Over the past several days it has had to adjust several figures and concede that many were nothing more than half-baked statistical information and manipulations. This was particularly true of the statistics concerning health, welfare and post-secondary education.

First, it was trying to take credit for money which legally belonged to the provinces under contractual obligations it signed under the Established Programs Financing agreements. Second, it tried to give the impression, at least, that most of the money was discretionary, so-called new money, and subsequently the Minister of Finance had to admit that none of it was discretionary and that it indeed legally belonged to the provinces.

Third, in the Throne Speech the Government told us the amount involved was \$500 million, but the Minister of Finance goes to Montreal, a mere 100 miles away, and suddenly, on the road there, finds another \$269 million. The Government cannot even get its facts straight any more. Are the Canadian people expected to believe that the federal Government did not know about this beforehand—that the Throne Speech suddenly made this revelation and the next day, within 100 miles, on the road to Montreal, it just happened to find another \$269 million? Who is it trying to kid? The Minister of Finance is developing a reputation for marginal adjustments of \$200 million or more since his last budget speech.

The fourth manipulation is that Ministers have also tried to leave the impression that the sum to be transferred to the provinces is entirely targeted for health care. They know and we know that is not the case. In their public statements they should make clear what those amounts are and not leave in the