

*The Address—Mr. Gourde*

as a result of a recent seminar sponsored by the CNTU, I committed myself to have all interested parties hold a multi-partite meeting to try to find a comprehensive solution to the problems facing that industry. On October 31, I wrote to the Prime Minister, to the Quebec Premier, to the Ministers of Finance and Industry, Trade and Commerce of both levels of Government, to the Minister of Supply and Services, to management and labour spokesmen, to mayors, in short to everyone interested in quickly calling a meeting where the participants would seek jointly a common solution which, in my opinion, faithfully reflects the spirit of the Speech from the Throne we heard yesterday.

His Excellency also pointed out that the Canadian Government wants to protect our health care system. Several provinces have implemented user fees or have already announced their intention to do so. In Quebec, Mr. Parizeau did nothing more than mention the possibility of such action.

The public at large has often voiced its concern about the serious erosion of the health care system. The phenomena which are peculiar to that erosion include the practice of extra billing by physicians, the implementation of user fees with respect to hospital care, emergency treatment, out-patient care and day surgery. According to what we have heard so far, the major objective of the new legislation would be to maintain the health insurance basic principles and amend the existing statute so as to clarify vague definitions which might lead to misinterpretations.

The Government has already announced that the purpose of the new legislation would be to set moderate and practical penalties to be imposed after discussion and consultation with the provinces concerned. As a Government, we acknowledge—I speak on behalf of the Government—that health care is a provincial responsibility, but if we are to offer financial assistance to the provinces, we can make certain conditions and establish general principles. It is not true that user fees for hospital services will reduce unnecessary medical appointments or needless requests for care, since patients are admitted to and discharged from hospitals by the physicians themselves. Everyone knows that hospital expenses account for the lion's share of health care funds.

Secondly, a questionable situation cannot be remedied by a social injustice. Those who believe that levying a tax on illness would reduce the number of medical appointments conveniently forget to consider the disadvantages. Should a significant segment of society be deprived of free health care because a small minority abusively strain the system? The Canadian Government has made its choice and universal care will be protected throughout Canada. When it comes to health, people are not labelled as being short, tall, poor or rich. There are only Canadians. The present Liberal Government will lead the fight, and I will be proud to carry our colours in that fight.

Another important aspect of yesterday's speech is the consideration given to help for young Canadians. The situation in

which they find themselves today is the result of the trying times which all Canadians have lived through in recent years. Fast technological changes, the anguish caused by the nuclear threat, the wars raging in many countries around us, the damage caused to our environment, the waste of our natural resources, the fear of an energy shortage, and finally, the recent economic recession, all this overwhelms our young people so that they cannot foresee any possible future and feel they are at a dead end. Reality for them seems a long journey between school, unemployment, an unsatisfactory job and finally social welfare. Those who have a job are happy to have it whatever the working conditions and worry only over the prospect of how long it will last. Aware of the fact that a diploma without practical experience is of little value, some young people decide without much conviction to extend their studies, while others simply give up to join all the others who cannot be classified as unemployed, as students as welfare recipients or as workers. This situation creates a feeling of helplessness among young people, for whom the rate of suicide is now four times higher than it was forty years ago, and this does not include the figures on unsuccessful suicide attempts, nor the cases of young people looking to alcoholism, drugs, prostitution or other means to escape the hard realities of life.

It appears that about 677,000 young people are now unemployed, which is about half the total number of unemployed in the country. The Quebec Youth Summit held last August, which was attended by 800 participants from every walk of life and served as a consultation forum for young people, proved beyond the shadow of a doubt in view of the impressive list of 230 resolutions passed at the Summit that our young people who seem to form a very mixed group are determined to overcome their plight. This privileged forum resulted in a new collective awareness of common problems and the will on the part of young people to claim their due by taking the means necessary to achieve their aim. The resolutions show that young people want to be autonomous and responsible and that they do not want to be taken in charge, but they want to be given the necessary tools.

The General Council of the Liberal Party (Quebec Section) recommended last March 26 that we support the efforts of the party's Youth Commission to create a ministry for youth. Members on this side of the House have regularly raised the problems faced by our young people, especially with regard to employment, both in the House and in caucus, over these last few years. To examine this whole issue and suggest solutions, a task force made up of Senator Jacques Hébert, the Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre) and the Hon. Member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier) was established, and their recommendations were endorsed by the Quebec Liberal Caucus at Delage Lake last September.

At a time when society as a whole seems overwhelmed by the problems of young people who more than any other group are the victims of the recession, of the upheaval of traditional