

*Medical Care Act*

another area on which the government should focus. I mentioned the increase in the birth rate. In 1950 the rate was 40 per 1,000. Today this has increased to 64 per 1,000. A study of children raised on cow's milk, compared to those raised in the traditional manner on mother's milk, shows a six to ten times increase in middle-ear infection and a 10 to 15 times increase in the incidence of anaemia.

Madam Speaker, the standard of health of those people, who are the direct responsibility of the federal government, lags far behind those for whom the province has direct responsibility. One of the things that must enter into any discussion of Bill C-68 is the deplorable health standards among our native people. To be constructive, may I suggest that the federal government intensify its efforts to disseminate information on nutrition in the north. There should be more nutritionists who could promote safe diet patterns when people change from their traditional foods. As an example, look at what has happened with the introduction of sugar to the diet of the northern people. Traditionally, they did not use sugar at all, but that has changed markedly.

At present, an average native person would use something like 1¾ cups of sugar per day through sugar in coffee, candy, cheesies, cookies and cakes and all of the sweets associated with the white man's diet. The deplorable fact arising from this is that the once traditionally sound teeth they had are now amongst the worst in North America. Anyone who visits northern communities and sees young children with mouths full of rotten teeth can understand what has happened to their society. They would not have been able to survive in the past had their teeth been in such poor condition. The change has been brought about by the white culture, and the responsibility in a health sense lies with the federal government.

In essence, this bill aims to let the federal government pull back on its health services. I submit that there is every reason to increase health care expenditures, not cut back. For example, in the last 20 years tooth decay in northern communities has increased by 160 per cent. So severe is the incidence of swollen gums and rotting teeth that the 15 dentists serving 1,500,000 miles of the Northwest Territories cannot possibly cope. About all they can do is pull out painful teeth; they have no time for fillings or other treatment. The standard of dental health in our northern communities is deplorable, possibly one of the lowest in North America, and dentists simply do not have time to undertake necessary treatment.

● (1620)

For the native people's poor dental health, is a result of their contact with the white man's culture. We are interested in pipelines, oil, gas and minerals in the north. Unfortunately, our government does not focus its attention on the other aspect of the equation, the health of the native peoples. While we may have every right to be interested in the resources of the north, the native peoples have every right to expect an associated response; in other words, health care for our native peoples of the north. Instead of cutting back money for health services, why does the government not set up a program whereby third of fourth year dental students will do part of their training in northern communities?

[Mr. Malone.]

Even if dental students were to work in far northern communities, the problem would still remain large. It is hard to explain how terrible the situation is. I submit that mine is a reasonable request. Perhaps these young dentists could be called the Company of Responsible Canadians—which would be an act counter to the Liberal tradition.

To summarize, the change of diet, related to the influx of the white man and the white man's culture in the north, has adversely affected many northern communities. For that reason we must give more attention to northern communities. For example, consider the situation with regard to diabetes. The number of cases is up three fold from that of ten years ago. The Eskimo diet changed in the 1950s and 1960s from one containing almost no sugar to one containing between 70 and 130 pounds of sugar per year. Consider cholesterol-related diseases. There has been a fivefold increase in the incidence of calcification of leg arteries and a considerable increase in heart ailments, something virtually unheard of in Eskimo communities when the explorers first came across them some hundreds of years ago. Consider the situation with regard to obesity. This is becoming a problem, particularly among men and women from 18 to 40 years of age living in or near white settlements. It is not a noticeable problem among natives who practice the traditional lifestyles of the Eskimo culture.

Consider the incidence of gall bladder disease. This has become one of the most serious diseases affecting North American Indians and Eskimos. In Inuvik, gall bladder operations outnumbered all other operations in the past five years. Until recently, gall bladder disease was virtually unknown among Eskimo peoples.

Let me summarize the needs of the north. Instead of cutting back funds for medical services, the government ought to increase funds. Certainly, proposing a bill to cut back expenditures in an area where the federal government has sole responsibility is unacceptable. The record of the government has been absolutely deplorable. Here, I wish to make three suggestions which ought to be taken seriously. First, there is a need to increase greatly the number of nutritionists providing nutritional education in northern communities. They could help the native peoples of the area to adapt to the new lifestyle and to the new diet. I say this because their traditional diet gave them a sound body. At present they are inadequately nourished and consequently are among the most deprived people in Canada.

Second, the federal government should spend much more money providing dental care to people in northern communities. Virtually every child is afflicted with cavities, often a whole mouthful, a situation virtually unknown decades ago: cavities were unheard of in Eskimo communities in times gone by. Third, the Department of National Health and Welfare should assume some responsibility in connection with the development of Canada's north. I say this for a good reason. It is irresponsible of the federal government to encourage activities like the building of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and the drilling for offshore oil in the north without at the same time making provision for the health care needs of native peoples who will be affected by the change of diet resulting from their encounter with the white man. It is irresponsible not to assume the costs of health problems of our native peoples while reap-