

Supply

when our health care system is in crisis, we cannot abandon our principles.

This House must reconfirm our commitment to the principles of medicare, to universality, to accessibility, to the prohibition of user fees and deterrent fees. We must reject clearly the solutions being proposed by Liberal premiers.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, let me begin by giving a warning to the Canadian public. Anybody who thought that this was going to be about Canada's health care system, forget it. This is going to be a debate about political advantage. This is going to be another instance in the House of Commons where the New Democratic Party is going to show its holier than thou attitude. "We sit on the sidelines and criticize".

It was not the socialists of Canada that created the health care system. It was the Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker who introduced hospital care. It was successive Liberal governments that fostered the health care system and I give them credit for that. We have reached a stage where we cannot carry on with the current hospital and health care system.

The abuse within the health care system has created a situation where we cannot afford to progress. The reason is there are no caps. There are no caps internally, there are no caps externally; the health care system is running itself. As responsible government, as responsible persons, we have to step in and ensure that we can fund the health care system.

We will hear the members of the New Democratic Party describe the level of service in Canada. Health services have declined in Canada for the last five years. Anybody will attest to that fact. There are line-ups in hospital emergency sections, it is difficult to book surgery and so on. So we have to do something. For anybody to stand and say that we must continue the attitudes, the concepts and the principles on which our health care system is based is nuts.

Let me talk about universality. How can we continue the concept of universality? It was a concept designed to avoid things like means testing systems and so on. Now it is starting to destroy the system because universality, the principle which the New Democratic Party mentioned, is affecting accessibility. We cannot have them both unless we are willing to unleash millions and billions of public

and taxpayers' dollars. Responsibility dictates that we cannot do that. Let us hear the New Democratic Party come up with some real solutions to the problems.

Mr. Karpoff: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is very obvious is that the Tories have completely abandoned the Prime Minister when he said that universal social programs were a sacred trust.

The member stands up now and says that the Tory party no longer believes in universality. Universality must be protected because it ensures that the weakest are eligible for service. We cannot maintain the principles and develop alternatives within our health care system to allow for the continuation. The minister of health—and I must say he has been steadfast on this, under great pressure from even his own province—had the foresight to say that there will be no user fees. We will not allow those Liberal administrations to introduce user fees. Although the minister talks a good principle, unfortunately he is part of a government that is cutting back on resources of the provinces to be able to meet those principles and to be able to meet those standards.

• (1030)

I want to talk a bit about Established Programs Financing. The government always tries to pretend that it controls it because of the escalating costs. The transfer payments to the provinces under Established Programs Financing had nothing to do with the costs. They were based on the growth in the gross national productivity of this country. In other words as the wealth of the country increased the transfer payments increased. That is the only way they increased except with the addition of population.

This government has said that in spite of the fact we have an increase in our growth of productivity, increase in our ability to pay, ability being based on the increase in the economy, we are going to slash our transfer payments arbitrarily and cut back on the formula for transfer payments.

That is what has happened. It is not that there has been a slowdown up until the last year or two in the economy as much as the fact that this government has simply said that it is not going to meet its responsibilities for a cost shared program. It is going to break its responsibilities for a joint partnership with the provinces.