

Medicare

monies set aside for medicare are just transferable funds.

I therefore urge the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) to keep close tabs on the nation's economic situation so that, with an improved plan, a plan taking into account the suggestions which have been made in the house, we may have, in the interests of all Canadians, a medicare plan acceptable not only to the federal government but also to all provinces. And if one province wishes to implement its own medicare plan, I hope the federal government will be broad-minded enough to grant it tax equalization, in order to prevent double taxation of its residents and enable them to take advantage of this timely plan.

• (5:00 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Richard Cashin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity of saying a few words this afternoon. With other members, we on this side of the house have been witnessing with amusement the spectacle of the pendulum swinging through full cycle. Just a few months ago the opposition benches poured forth compassion in an unparalleled way on the old age pensioners of this country. I find it quite inconsistent, when one recalls those wonderful words of rhetoric on previous occasions, to consider what is happening now. It is hard to believe that the same party in the house is speaking. This of course confirms a suspicion which has lingered for a long time in the minds of the Canadian people, that notwithstanding the occasional dash into the field of social security, basically the Conservative party has opposed virtually every social reform in this country.

An hon. Member: That is cheap.

Mr. Cashin: For a few months, under the once dynamic leadership of the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) it appeared there was a change in the Conservative party ranks. This, to the many people who swept that party into power, proved to be false. Now, looking back one might feel that perhaps the right hon. gentleman really meant to do more than he was able to do. Perhaps the mistakes, and the lack of advance, were not due so much to himself as to the fact that he was leading a party which was basically a nineteenth century

Tory party. Today, Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the voice of opposition members, it seemed to me that I was hearing the words of Queen's Park. I heard nineteenth century Toryism wrapped in a twentieth century image. It would seem that the true blues can rest assured. Alleluia. They are going to regain control of the once great Conservative party. Probably, to be consistent, their first action ought to be that of dropping the word "progressive".

An hon. Member: Do you support the postponement?

Mr. Cashin: Perhaps I might refer to certain things documented by the leader of the New Democratic Party. Some unusual positions have been adopted. In fact, just a short while ago—a few years ago—this Conservative party, when it was under the imaginative leadership of the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert endorsed at a party convention a medicare program paralleling the program now introduced by the government. That was when the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert appeared to be in command of the troops. Today of course we have witnessed a magnificent retreat that, in the words of the right hon. Leader of the Opposition, calls to mind the retreat of Napoleon from Waterloo.

An hon. Member: He retreated from Moscow.

Mr. Douglas: He was licked at Waterloo. It might be better to say he retreated all the way to Waterloo.

Mr. Cashin: Perhaps I was mixing historical facts. Instead of saying that it is like the retreat from Moscow, I should say that here we have the Waterloo of the Conservative party.

On the one hand the Conservatives are against any delay in medicare, while on the other they want to kill medicare. The amendment if carried, would have that effect. This would be to the liking of those true blue Tories who feel once again they are taking over their party. Also—and this is a major inconsistency—they are against the means test. It was a terrible thing even to suggest it in the case of the old age pensioners—and we have this from this party that was in favour of the great charities. Paraphrasing the words of the leader of the New Democratic Party: Nobody wants to see tin cups held by the five million Canadians involved in this country.