

programs and care for Canadians of all ages who suffer due to mental illnesses.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that my time is almost up. I would have wanted to delve into the problem of mental illnesses and how we care for our people, but perhaps that will come in another debate.

We in the Liberal Party have a strong commitment to Canada's medicare program. We fear that the lack of interest from this government might lead us into expensive private plans to which only a small percentage of Canadians would have access. Our interest in social programs remains one based on universality. That means that we are all equal and we should at least have equal medical care in this very rich and prosperous country.

I would say to the minister and to all of my colleagues who would think otherwise: Keep your hands off of our medicare system. It is one for which we have worked very hard and one which is surely worth preserving for our children and our children's children.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): I listened with great interest, as I always do when my hon. friend from Welland speaks. He did leave me a little bit confused on one point and I would like to put a very specific question to him in that regard, and I am sure that his answer will be as specific as my question.

I heard him very clearly say that we should be spending more in provincial transfers. I must say I know that if we were able to do that we would very much ingratiate ourselves with the government of my province, the government of Nova Scotia. I notice in the budget this year that the government is indeed increasing EPF payments by 3.7 per cent while limiting its own growth to 3.4 per cent.

Therefore, my question to my hon. friend is: Would he specifically tell us which programs of the government he would cut in order to make available the additional moneys that he thinks should be applied to health care.

Mr. Parent: Mr. Speaker, I do thank my hon. friend from South Shore for his question. He said that they were going to increase the payments by 3.7 per cent. If it is true that inflation this year is going to be, I believe,

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well over 6 per cent and possibly 7 per cent, I think that what we would have there is not an increase but a decrease because they are not even keeping up with inflation.

But the question was very specific and very fair, and I imagine it comes down to priorities. The hon. member asked for an opinion from me, and I could tell him that my priorities would be to put our moneys into our social programs rather than into defence spending. I think it is much more important to save lives and to take care of Canadians than to have all of the weaponry which would be destructive, not only to Canadians but to other people.

And that is a specific suggestion to a very specific question.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Is that Liberal Party policy?

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): I would be happy, Mr. Speaker, to begin by answering the hon. minister's question except I did not hear it, so he can wait and ask me in the proper way at the end.

I am delighted to stand and speak in support of the motion by my hon. colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, that this House reaffirm its commitment to medicare, and that we reaffirm this commitment not by idle words, not by pious mouthings, but by putting some money where those pious mouthings are.

Another friend of mine, the hon. member for South Shore, got up and talked about how Liberal policies would gladden the hearts of his own government—my government, too,—in Nova Scotia, and I want to talk a little bit about what this government policy is doing in the province of Nova Scotia. Today a headline in the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* states: "Cuts in federal payments put medicare system in danger". I quote: "Medicare is something most Canadians take for granted but shouldn't. It may not be with us much longer".

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This article goes on to tell us about the cuts, which my friends on the other side keep saying are not cuts, that Bill C-69 freezes transfer payments to the provinces for health and education at the 1989-90 until 1995. Given the inflation rate and given the way this country is developing, that is a cut. And a cut is a cut is a cut.