

Government Orders

been offering recommendations either at a federal or provincial level. I have named two such groups.

Instead of reinventing the wheel over the next few months, we must make sure that these groups are part of the national health forum and that many other new ideas are brought forth from other groups or forums such as the ones the member is talking about. Maybe this is something that we should all be looking at to get the data. However there are people out there already who have some tremendous ideas that certainly should be in front of the forum.

As far as the five basic principles of the health care program are concerned, I do not think anybody is arguing them. They are the basis for Canadians having one of the best health care programs in the world. User fees come into it as they are a component of one or more of those five principles. That aspect goes more to the management of achieving those five components and providing the service than being one of the five components.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South): Mr. Speaker, I noted the member for Surrey North indicated in her comments that the average height of a man was five feet, seven inches. I would be interested in what the average weight is at some point.

I have been sitting here trying to sort out exactly what it is that I want to say in only 10 minutes. This is an immense topic. I have spent most of my working life in what we are defining as the social services.

As a teenager I worked in the core area of my city in settlement houses. I have worked with handicapped people, the disabled and emotionally disturbed kids. I ended that portion of my career as the director of child welfare in my province. I have wrestled with some of these issues for some time.

It is interesting in a sense when I reflect on how I became involved in politics. It was in the mid-1970s. I received a call from a friend of mine who worked in an agency that was similar to the one I was directing at that point. He said that a politician wanted to speak to us, that he wanted to meet with a few people to talk about social policy.

I was a little unsure just what that meant because my view of politicians was like that of most people who are somewhat removed from the system, but I went. I was maybe a little in awe that somebody who we see on TV and who sits in a legislative chamber would want to talk to me. That night I met the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre. We spent an entire evening just sitting on the couch with a few people talking about what was happening in social programs in the city of Winnipeg in 1975.

As we talked we sort of wrestled with what are the things that are helping people, what are the things that are supporting people, what are the things that are showing signs of success and

what are the things that need change. Therefore when I see Lloyd stand in the House—

The Deputy Speaker: You must refer to the member or the minister but not to the member by name. That is a strictly enforced rule in this place.

• (1750)

Mr Alcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I cannot even argue the rule at this point. When I see the minister stand in the House I see him making the same offer. He is not standing to put on record a whole bunch of Liberal Party rhetoric. He is making a very genuine request: "I ask members of the House and all Canadians to work with my government to develop an action plan".

Obviously this is an area that interests me, so I read very carefully what the Leader of the Official Opposition and the lead speaker of the Reform Party had to say. I must say I was a little disappointed in what I heard coming from the Official Opposition. When I meet with members of the Official Opposition, when I talk to members of the Official Opposition, I hear them saying some fairly progressive things about social policy. I think they have a fundamental understanding of the issue. However when I heard their leader speak he said something I have become accustomed to hearing from the New Democratic Party in my province: "Don't touch anything. Don't change anything. You dasn't muss a hair of this program". That is unfortunate because I think there is a great deal of wisdom to be shared with the House as we search for a solution to make the lives of Canadians better.

Frankly I do not know how to respond to the intervention by the Reform Party. I read it several times and made some notes on it because I was trying to figure it out. It seemed to say we have to cut everything today so we will have it tomorrow. There is a curiousness in the logic there that escapes me somewhat.

These are serious problems. They affect the lives of real people living in our communities. We have right now a tremendous opportunity. In the mid-1960s in Canada and the United States, at a time when government had huge revenues, we created the social safety net or the core of it. Some pieces were already in place. Canada has been a progressive country for a long time. We created a network of services that was the result of our best thinking at that time. We have had experience with it. We have learned over time that some of the things we did were good and that some were not so good.

We learned, for example, that a lot of the services that we provide tend not to empower people. They tend to remove their ability to function independently. We confronted that in the provision of services in a great many communities.

We have a fiscal crisis right now. If we want to look at the glass half full side of the fiscal crisis, maybe it is a good thing the crisis is forcing this debate. Maybe we will finally challenge some of our assumptions about how we provide help to people.