

Government Orders

That should appeal to the mentality on the other side because those members now have a new altar at which they worship: competitiveness. They even bring in guys from Harvard. They are paying them \$1 million to put in print all the things that we have been saying over the years.

Now all of these prosperity committees have been set up. They have them running around the country at a cost \$15 million. They have little coffee klatches to hear the same. They are washing their laundry, drinking coffee, washing it and drinking it and washing it. Do not ask me how to get in the cup after.

Instead of doing these kinds of constructive things, what we are spending time debating is Bill C-21 which says: "See, we are going to stick our finger in. We are going to pull out a plum and what good boys and girls we are over here in the government".

This is nothing but smoke and mirrors. We ought not to be spending our time dealing with this kind of nonsense.

What are some of the other things that our country really needs to put us in a position when the recovery comes, when the bugle call is out and when the cavalry comes over the hill to rescue the economy, what do we need to emphasize, apart from ensuring that our infrastructure at the municipal level is there? We need a trained work force. All the Tories ever do is talk about training.

They eliminated the Science Council of Canada. That was a body that could take the pulse of where we are in terms of scientific training and technological training. That is gone. They have eliminated that, they do not want to hear bad news. They should be taking a good hard look and putting some money into training Canadians so that they can be better equipped to deal with the changing economy. They have not done that. They do not want to talk about that and we are going to talk about it over and over again interminably.

There is also the question of the social programs of this country. Unlike the Tories and their mind-set on this matter, I believe that the social programs of this country make the workers and the people of this country more competitive. It is certainly a competitive advantage.

I will tell members of an experience I had. I was with the consumer and corporate affairs committee in Washington to look at credit card interest rates. While there, I got talking to a worker who was serving a luncheon. I

asked the worker: "Tell me, do you have medicare coverage?". He said: "No, sir, I do not have medicare coverage. I cannot afford it.". It costs them something like \$350 a month to be covered. He said: "I cannot afford \$350 a month to be covered.". I said to him, because now I want to prove the psychological effect of this: "Do you worry about this?". He said: "Sir, I worry about it all the time because if I get injured, if I get hurt, if I get sick, it would wipe me out completely."

An hon. member: What about his children?

Mr. Rodriguez: This was a single person. How can any person, working on a job that requires attention, requires commitment, be worrying about his health coverage and his health care and be able to be productive in the accomplishment of the tasks that he has to do?

That is one of the advantages our system has and every one of these programs, whether it is old age pensions, whether it is family allowances, whether it is unemployment insurance, are all designed to be a safety net for people.

These things have to be seen for what they are. They are competitive advantages. Not only are they protection for Canadians, they also provide an advantage. Instead of bolstering and strengthening these programs, this government is out to destroy them. This election cannot come too soon because they are on the road to destroy medicare. I want to tell Canadians that.

You just have to watch Don Getty in Alberta and what is happening to the medicare program in Alberta. The Tories are going to extrapolate that from the provincial level right across the country.

We have the spectre of the Liberals. We saw a Liberal in New Brunswick suggesting that maybe universality and medicare are something we can no longer afford. We have a Liberal government in the province of Quebec that is attempting to bring in user fees. The Liberals have no more commitment to the universality of social programs than the Tories have. Let us not kid ourselves.

My fear is well grounded because we have seen them doing it. We seen them do it with family allowances. They attempted it when they first got into office by trying to deindex old age pensions. We saw that with the clawback of the old age pensions and we see that all the way. They are eroding the design to make us more like our cousins to the south. We must have their consumer patterns. We must have their music and their cultural