

Canada Assistance Plan

similar to an open-heart surgery on a scale greater even than that suggested by the proponents of medicare.

There may be need for a radical revision of the attitude taken toward the problems of people who are receiving social assistance. I think this will be one of the very real challenges to the minister, and one for which only he can be responsible as head of the department, to set a tone that will be followed throughout the department in the administration of the Canada Assistance Plan.

I wish to say that I am not opposed to the plan, as I think I pointed out at the resolution stage of this bill. We in the Social Credit party are not opposed to this plan. As has been pointed out it proposes a great many things that are absolutely essential and which will give to the welfare services of the entire nation a tremendous impetus. However, this plan will need a most careful administration. The provisions I like in particular are those which deal with assistance to people who are close to the level where welfare is necessary, but who, with some help from the welfare departments, can make their own way. I am glad to say that these people are covered by the plan.

As has been suggested in the article which appeared this morning in the *Globe and Mail*, consideration should perhaps be given to extending this plan to cover programs in schools where potential problems may exist. I know, and I am sure every school teacher in the country knows, how frequently problems develop about which nothing can be done until they reach such severity as to demand drastic attention. Once that point is reached, then attention is given when, in fact, earlier action could have prevented the problems from developing in the first place.

I congratulate the minister on his plan and I urge that it be administered in the enlightened fashion which I am sure Mr. Baetz anticipated. I trust we can find in the example from Prince Edward Island a basis on which the older people of this country can hope to receive assistance from this plan.

Mr. Richard Cashin (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying last evening, before we got diverted to other matters, I am pleased at having an opportunity to speak on this particular piece of legislation. I may say, when the events of this day are viewed in the perspective of this entire parliament, that we shall probably come to the conclusion that today we saw a singularly gross example of

[Mr. Johnston.]

partisanship and a greater disregard for the needs of the people of this country than has been shown by any political party for a long time, namely the very surprising and shocking action taken by the New Democratic Party. As we all know, the effect of that amendment would have been to kill this legislation.

● (5:40 p.m.)

Perhaps some impartial observer sitting above parliament and viewing our deliberations might have anticipated or at least might have found it more understandable if such action were taken by the Conservative party, because it may be said that one does not expect Conservative parties to have that same avant garde understanding of the complicated nature of the war on poverty. One would have expected that those who hold forth on idealism, who fill the pages of *Hansard* continually with pleas for the little man in Canada, that those people who have held themselves up as knights in shining armour, as the statesmen who have tried to save parliament, would have rapped the knuckles of the Conservatives if they had done this. It would have been suggested that the Conservatives acted irresponsibly. The two old line parties would have been ridiculed.

What did we see in the day's events? It would have been reprehensible but more understandable if the Conservatives had done this, but they chose not to do so. I do not believe one has to congratulate them for acting in that way; they merely acted in a responsible fashion. Certainly the action taken by this group, and particularly by the individual member who introduced the amendment, I think was shocking. I believe the people of Canada should know an attempt was made to play politics with the widows, the orphans and the other needy people of this country, many of whom form the real hard core of the poor, by the New Democratic Party. I think, Mr. Speaker, if there is any suggestion about partisan politics in parliament during the course of past sessions, it ought to have been made clear to all observers that, although we are all sometimes guilty of this offence, the group in this house most guilty has been the same New Democratic Party.

It is unfortunate that the hon. member who introduced the amendment had to do this, because over the past quarter of a century I suppose he has assumed unto himself the title of defender of the little man. Certainly his