

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Southwest.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that sounded more like a job security speech to me than a health care issue.

In a March 15 speech the Prime Minister promised to uphold the five pillars of medicare but he could not tell his audience how he would do it. In a March 4 speech the health minister encouraged the provinces to experiment broadly with health care delivery and yet refused to say what powers the provinces would be given to do that job.

My last question is for the finance minister. How long will Canadians have to wait before the government presents a concrete blueprint for health care reform? How long?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Reform Party would listen instead of preaching all the time.

From the very beginning we have been very clear. Yes, there is flexibility providing we maintain the principles and we keep a system which serves all Canadians regardless of whether they have money or not. Our system has to be based on need. What the Reform Party is advocating is a U.S. style of medicare, a system for the fit and fortunate.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. In a speech yesterday at the Canadian Club in Toronto, the ex-president of the CBC, Tony Manera, showed that cutting the CBC's budget by more than one third will seriously jeopardize the current mandate of the Crown corporation. At the same time, the new president of the CBC, former Conservative minister Perrin Beatty, said in reference to the cancelling of entire programs at the CBC that we are running out of time to make difficult decisions.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that his new appointee to the helm of the CBC is ready and willing to cut as much as one third from the CBC's current budget and to lay off between 3,000 and 4,000 employees?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cuts of four per cent for this year were announced in the Minister of Finance's budget. In fact this is not out of proportion, compared to cuts we were forced to make in other sectors.

We also decided then that we had to review the CBC's mandate and that of other related organizations in order to determine how to adjust to today's realities with today's finan-

cial means, and in order to determine the kind of television network we need in order to be competitive in the 21st century.

• (1430)

When the CBC was created, Canadians only had access to two television channels; now they can access between 100 and 200 channels. In the near future, we will be setting up a committee to align the CBC's mandate with today's and tomorrow's realities, and working from the revised mandate, we will determine a budget enabling the CBC and other similar organizations to reach their new objectives.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister realize that the CBC has already been hit by previous budget cuts, is being hit by those contained in the current budget and that it will also be hit by future budgets?

Has the Prime Minister considered whether the deep cuts that he is planning to impose on the CBC, which will apply indiscriminately to the English and French networks despite the fact that the French network outperforms the English one by a long shot, will seriously jeopardize the mandate and future of Radio-Canada?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always recognized in the past the necessity of having a French radio and television network in Canada. Might I add that the CBC's budget is divided. The French radio and television network receives a proportionally higher share of funding than the francophone population would have warranted. We want to continue giving good French language service to Canadians from coast to coast. But this budget must be adjusted to take into consideration today's realities and the new mandate we need to give, given that competition is no longer limited to just one network but now involves hundreds of networks. We must give an appropriate vocation to both the English and French networks of the CBC.

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[English]

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my physician colleagues tell me that the Canada Health Act is outdated.

For example, the Canada Health Act is supposed to provide reasonable access to health services yet in Manitoba people are waiting 60 weeks for hip replacement. In Saskatchewan people are waiting 30 weeks for cataract surgery. Quebecers have to line up behind 1,460 patients for hernia surgery.

Will the minister responsible for these waiting lists define reasonable access so that Canadians will be protected by the Canada Health Act?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that Canadians have been protected by the Canada Health Act.