

I would like to ask the member how he can reconcile his position with the fact that the erosion of medicare was initiated by the Liberals. Read the budget of 1975 of the former leader of the Liberals, John Turner. He is the one who capped the transfer payments and brought in the whole business of block funding to get away from the partnership that was built with the provincial governments so that they would not be required to pay 50 per cent of the costs in the early 1980s.

The Liberals unilaterally moved away from the revenue guarantee which costs the provinces \$1.2 billion every year in lost revenue for medicare. The Liberals did that. How can the member stand up and say the government is eroding medicare when the foundation for that erosion and abandonment of medicare was laid by the Liberals in those three instances?

Why did the Liberals bring in the measures which eroded the medicare system and actually brought in the foundation for the federal government to erode it?

**Mr. Pagtakhan:** Mr. Speaker, I am really excited that there is an active debate emerging on the issue. In fact, it is part of the rationale of why we decided to put this motion before the House.

We would like the attention of all Canadians focused on this, because if we review the history and the commitment of this government to social programs, we see that it has done away with many the social programs step by step.

Now, Mr. Speaker, through you to my colleague from the New Democratic Party who would like to pontificate and would care to forget the lessons of history, I am glad that today he did not say that the NDP started medicare. Once before, he did say that. Finally, he has learned the lesson that it was the Liberal Party in the 1919 Liberal convention that made a commitment to Canada to introduce medicare.

After we conceived the idea, unlike the NDP, we put action into it. We gave birth to it. After having given birth to medicare, we would like to continue to nurture it like a good parent to any child.

I think the hon. member forgot that the newest Canada Health Act was introduced in 1984. I do not know where his history book is. I ask the NDP to put on record whether he will join the government and defeat

### *Supply*

this motion. I would like him to say "yes" or "no" when his opportunity comes during debate.

**Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House today is about medicare and whether Parliament continues to support it.

That is the motion, but the issue is something very different indeed. It is about truth and whether members on all sides of this House will deal openly and honestly with the challenges facing Canada's health care system.

In the exchange which just took place with regard to the nature of the motion before the House, we learned the facts. The motion itself is very symptomatic of the problem. What it does is demonstrate the tactics which are being employed.

On the face of it, it is a very straightforward motion calling upon members of Parliament to announce their support for medicare. The vehicle being used, as is conceded by the Liberal Party opposite, is a non-confidence motion. Were it to pass, it would require the government to resign. We can hardly accept this as an honest attempt, a straightforward attempt, on the part of the Liberal Party to encourage non-partisan all-party support for the principles underlying medicare.

The opposition parties say that they support medicare, and I accept their word for that. On this side of the House we also continue to support this country's system of national health insurance, although the Liberals and the NDP would sow false fears among Canadians and have them believe that the government has a secret plan to do away with medicare.

What evidence do they tender for such a claim? From time to time, it is simply unsubstantiated claims that some element of the free trade agreement which they have as yet been unable to find would require it. The fact that the free trade agreement does nothing of the sort has not dissuaded them. It is politically convenient to sow the seeds of fear.

More recently, they have added a new claim; that federal financing for medicare is drying up. It is a claim that is equally false and which becomes no less false with repeated telling. The most recent example of this tactic was reported in Saturday's issue of the *Saskatoon Star-*