

their particular products. The company training provided is basically indoctrination in company policy.

Again we have to ask how effectively and how well are the insurance companies meeting the needs of people in our society. Earlier this afternoon I spoke about some of the public insurance programs that have been developed. I talked about automobile insurance in Saskatchewan, which has proven so valuable and which will be adopted by the other provinces in this country before very long. I spoke about hospital insurance and of the great benefits it has brought to the people of Canada. After I had concluded my earlier remarks, in which I said that the cost of administration of the Ontario hospital insurance program was 2.5 per cent in contrast with a figure that went as high as 37 per cent when it was in private operation, I had a chance to re-examine those figures and I understand it is even less than 2.5 per cent; it has gone as low as 1.5 per cent. This is a phenomenal figure with a meaning that cannot escape anyone. It means that virtually all the moneys collected for this purpose are used to provide health services for sick people instead of being wasted on distribution and spurious practices—

Mr. Alkenbrack: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would point out that this is not a point of order, but the hon. member can certainly try to ask a question.

Mr. Alkenbrack: With respect to the gist of his speech, has the hon. member ever heard of a chartered Canadian life insurance company ever beating one policyholder out of a dollar?

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question put to me by the hon. member. This is not what I was saying. No one disputes that life insurance companies in Canada are solvent. I would point out to the hon. member that one of the reasons they are solvent is that they are supervised by the federal government. We have an outstanding supervisory arrangement; we have an outstanding Superintendent of Insurance. This is one of the essential reasons that these companies have not, in the sense put by the hon. member, defrauded anyone.

I am not suggesting—I hope the hon. member will pay attention to this—that they have done it consciously and deliberately.

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This is the nature of the game; it is the kind of position they are in. Even with the best intentions the insurance companies cannot do anything about it. It is the structure that creates all this waste. I would not for one minute wish to leave the impression that the people in the insurance industry are not reliable or trustworthy in a certain sense. I am suggesting that the entire industry is not doing the job and that the practices that have grown up in the industry, the need to compete and make a profit, have not worked to the advantage of the people of this country. There must be a more sane and sensible way to serve the needs of the people rather than the archaic system that now prevails.

We brought in medical insurance in Canada. Despite all the efforts of the Prime Minister of Ontario to scupper and ruin the plan, it will succeed. He will have to change his attitude toward it. Other provinces are working with the federal government and doing an effective job of providing medical insurance for their people. The one province that is being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the twentieth century will have to change its ways before the next election or another party will replace it in the provincial house.

We have an insurance program covering exports from Canada. The government undertakes this function. In this particular case, probably the private insurance companies do not want to get involved in it because there is a risk connected with it. I make this point and draw your attention to it, Mr. Speaker, to point out that there are ample precedents for public involvement in the insurance field. I could point to CMHC insurance, the reason for which is the reduction of certain rates. Many governments undertake their own insurance when it comes to their buildings and properties simply because it is a cheaper and more effective way of doing it.

The old age security plan is an insurance program to which all Canadians contribute through their taxes and receive benefits upon retirement. I think the old age security plan, despite its inadequacies and despite the great job my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Center (Mr. Knowles) is doing in trying to convince those stick-in-the-muds across the way of the need for public justice, of the need to increase payments under the plan, basically is a very worth-while program. All Canadians could be proud of it if we increased the old age security pension.