

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON—REQUEST FOR AID FOR
LEBANESE POPULATION

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Hamilton West): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. Now that a ceasefire, uncertain as it may be, has been proclaimed between Israel, the PLO and Syrian forces in Lebanon following the invasion of Lebanon, can the Deputy Prime Minister advise this House whether the government will be providing humanitarian aid to the innocent people of Lebanon who have suffered so frightfully as a result of the ravages of war?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. The Canadian government has consistently responded to appeals for assistance for humanitarian purposes, and this certainly would apply to the case the hon. member has mentioned. The International Red Cross has made an appeal for assistance and for medical teams in Lebanon. It is preparing to make another more general appeal, and certainly Canada will be prepared to respond sympathetically to these requests.

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MEDICAL CARE

EXTRA BILLING BY PHYSICIANS—MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The minister has been going around the country in recent days trying to redefine the problem of extra billing by doctors and calling it the lesser of two evils, and so forth. The minister has been trying to put on a brave—but transparently superficial—face because of her failure at the recent health ministers' conference to get provincial agreement to eliminate extra billing.

Has the minister given up on her intention to eliminate—not to control but to eliminate—extra billing by doctors and, if she has, will she also tell us whether she was ever really serious about her intentions in this regard? There has been one meeting, the minister has packed it in, and she is now going around the country trying to redefine the problem.

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, as usual, the hon. member is engaging in rhetoric instead of attacking the real problem. It has always been our goal that extra billing should be eliminated. How can we reach that goal? I hope in due time we achieve a consensus among all the 11 governments, including the ten provinces, which have a direct role in banning extra billing by way of provincial legislation.

I am curious to see if the hon. member makes the same representation to Mr. Larry Desjardins in Manitoba, to see if

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Manitoba is ready to move. We never saw that in Saskatchewan when the hon. member's party was in power there. It is very easy to talk and talk, and repeat false allegations.

I would like to inform the hon. member again and Canadians generally that the last federal-provincial conference was a success in that for the first time all provincial ministers agreed that extra billing existed and was a problem which would be a threat to medicare. All ministers agreed that control of this was essential. The day before the meeting this matter was not even on the agenda as far as some ministers were concerned. I think there has been great success; the first step has been taken. We will succeed in strengthening medicare.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1150)

FEDERAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, obviously the minister is easily satisfied. She thinks it is an accomplishment to get people to recognize that extra billing exists. Speaking of rhetoric, she is the grand old lady of rhetoric herself. I warned the minister—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blaikie: I warned the minister, Madam Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I assume members opposite would not have been as happy had I called her the grand old man of rhetoric. I don't know what I was supposed to do.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blaikie: Madam Speaker, during the debate on established programs financing I warned the minister that the Minister of Finance was rendering her powerless with his cutbacks in support of health care and post-secondary education, but she was too weak to stand up to him at the time. Will she now admit that this pack over here, the government, through the Minister of Finance, has done serious harm to the future of medicare? Will she admit that mistake now, after seeing what the provincial health ministers can do to her using these cutbacks as a club with which to beat her over the head?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, my colleagues around me say that they hope I do not have to establish either that I am old or a lady. I am past that point, so I will not comment on the remarks of the hon. member.

I would like to repeat that he must understand, if he is sincere—and I think he is—in wanting to strengthen medicare once and for all, that confrontation is over. He must understand that. He must accept co-operation and collaboration, if he wants, by the way, to dream of being in government one day. But he does not want to recognize that fact. Provinces must work together with the federal government on medicare,