

I am appalled and amazed that my friend from the New Democratic Party, in the interest of defending Bob Rae or Roy Romanow or his colleague out in British Columbia, the newly elected leader out there, would say: 'You know, those cutbacks being made in Saskatchewan, Ontario and British Columbia, those lay-offs of nurses and of health care professionals, the closure of some wings of hospitals, the elimination of beds, are not attacks on universality, because even if we reduce our health care system to a band-aid station at least we will all have the same access to the same band-aids'. That is the NDP mentality. As long as the lowest common denominator is equally available to everybody it is not a cutback.

That is outrageous. Our battle cannot just be to keep the system universal even if what is universal is our accessibility to a poor system. Our battle has to be to keep a quality system, not to allow one level of government to dictate to every other level of government the quality of health care; to have an intelligent, informed debate about choices; and to ensure that health care is maintained in this country in a manner that it becomes a matter of pride and right of Canadian citizenship.

I fear for my colleagues in the NDP. I fear they have lost their way. I fear they are still trapped in the politics of yesterday, the division between right and left, the promotion of class warfare, this whole notion of making the rich pay or making the poor pay, and the setting of one segment of society against another segment of society. They are so lost in the politics of yesterday that they miss the onslaught of change that is upon us and the requirement for modern day political parties to manage change, not merely to stand and be drowned by it.

I say to my colleague that I understand the great and glorious days of the revolution, but the revolution is over. Canada must move forward into the 1990s and beyond.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Madam Speaker, there is never anything in this House quite so entertaining as the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte when he is in full flight.

I certainly do not intend to even try to compete at the rhetorical level with the hon. member or with the pious way he set upon his NDP colleagues for this motion. The

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way in which he responded points up the existence of some sensitivity in the Liberal ranks with respect to the whole question of user fees.

I would like to respond to something that was said earlier by the hon. member from Etobicoke. He talked about the Ontario NDP government on one hand and blamed it for the deficit in Ontario, after having earlier gone on about the incredibly deep recession that Canada was experiencing, particularly Ontario.

If we want to talk about not seeking unfair partisan advantage and not bending the truth in order to suit one's political agenda, the Liberals cannot have it both ways with respect to Ontario.

They cannot talk about the tremendous effect of the recession in Ontario and then in the very next sentence blame the deficit in Ontario on the Ontario NDP government. Surely, there is some connection between the recession in Ontario and the deficit that the government there has had to create as a result of the economic conditions that prevail in that province.

It was also certainly stretching the truth to say that the Ontario NDP had inherited a balanced budget. We know that is not the case, but that was the impression that the Liberal government of the day tried to create during the election campaign that brought the NDP to power.

In listening to the hon. member from Newfoundland, he pointed out something that maybe is at the heart of the debate here. He said that if the provincial budgets continue to be squeezed, to have the life squeezed out of them by unilateral federal cutbacks in Established Programs Financing, in Canada Assistance Program financing, in equalization payments or whatever the case may be, then at some point, particularly with respect to health care, provincial governments are faced with this choice between the devil and the deep blue sea, so to speak.

We have to respond either through cutbacks or through seeking out new sources of revenue. This is where the argument about user fees comes in.

The member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte did not want to make a distinction between the introduction of user fees and cutbacks in health care, seeing them both as equally an attack on medicare.