

The Budget—Mr. Holmes

a question I put to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Stanbury) which I believe is very important not only to members of this House but to all taxpayers of Canada. Even though I am a parliamentary secretary, I believe, as I said earlier, that in this regard I should be on an equal basis with all other elected hon. members. It is because I believe my question is of importance that I should like to have it incorporated in *Hansard*, just as questions of hon. members opposite are incorporated in *Hansard*. It is directed to the Minister of National Revenue and reads as follows:

Bearing in mind the deadline for income tax returns, which is coming up shortly, and with reference to my question of February 8, reported in *Hansard* at page 1076, with regard to the possibility of extending the office hours of income tax offices throughout the country in order to assist taxpayers seeking information in connection with income tax returns, may I ask whether the minister has now had time in which to consider this matter?

The answer is:

For the benefit of people unable to use the inquiry service during the day because they are at work, we are extending both the local and long-distance toll-free telephone inquiry service until 8 p.m. every Monday and Tuesday until April 30.

An hon. Member: What does the minister have to do with that?

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): If hon. members wish to ask questions when I have finished, I shall be glad to be of assistance on any matters in respect of which they are in doubt or do not know anything.

This information no doubt will be repeated by the minister at a later date so that the people of Canada will be aware of the additional service available to them. I do not believe any parliamentary secretary should have to remain silent. I do not believe, also, as some hon. members on the other side have suggested, that members on this side should be muzzled merely because they happen to hold office. I think all of us have a responsibility to our constituents. There is no reason why a parliamentary secretary should not ask a question, have it placed on the record in *Hansard* and thus be able to represent his constituents on a basis equal to that of hon. members opposite, provided the question is not directed to the department or to the minister he represents as parliamentary secretary.

As elected members of the common people—and this is what parliament is all about—notwithstanding the party to which we happen to belong, surely Members of Parliament on the government side have a right to be heard, whether backbenchers or parliamentary secretaries, and a right to have their remarks reported in the official record of this House on a basis equal to that of other Members of Parliament.

Mr. J. R. Holmes (Lambton-Kent): Mr. Speaker, I have followed the proceedings during this session in the hopeful anticipation that the government would come forward with new proposals to deal with the problem of the non-medical use of drugs, a problem which I feel is national in scope and certainly deserving of immediate attention.

I listened to the debate on the supplementary estimates. I heard the presentation of the budget, and I have reviewed the estimates for the fiscal year ending March

[Mr. Guay (St. Boniface).]

31, 1974. I have found nothing to suggest that there are any new proposals. What bothers me even more is that I am confident this government has in its possession authoritative information indicating that we are indeed dealing with a national problem of epidemic proportions.

I am certain this government is aware of the economic implications not only in terms of loss of productivity but in terms of actual dollars spent in respect of costly hospital admissions related to the effects of these drugs or their complications. I am also certain this government is aware of the social implications and the growing evidence of self-destruction which too frequently involves the youth of our society. I cannot understand the position of this government and its lack of initiative to accept leadership.

I cannot accept answers such as, "This is a matter which is the responsibility of the provincial governments" or, "We must await the report of the LeDain commission." I interpret such responses as clearly indicating that this government has not developed a policy to deal with this national crisis. Time does not permit me to review in detail the statistical data which indicates the magnitude of the problem. I am sure hon. members have read many articles in this regard. However, in order to place the problem in proper perspective I should like to refer hon. members to two articles. The first appeared in *Canadian Magazine* February 10, 1973. I shall quote from pages 2 and 3. The article is entitled "The Poppy's Evil Harvest" and reads in part:

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"Five years ago," the briefing book said, "the RCMP estimated the number of heroin addicts at 500. Today their modest estimate is 10,000 addicts and 100,000 users." The book also advised the Prime Minister, somewhat ominously that "many young users of heroin do not even realize how dangerous this drug is."

It goes on to indicate that in Edmonton there are 900 users, in Calgary 500, in Vancouver 5,000, in Winnipeg 350, in Montreal 1,000, in Halifax 100, in Toronto 3,000. If I may make one additional reference, Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer to the publication *Addictions*, the summer edition of 1972, by the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario. At page 47 of the publication the following is written:

Figures for the city, province and country are as elusive as dandelion seeds in the wind. Those available are usually subject to some kind of qualification. James Moore of the Le Dain commission puts the national figure at 10,000—published in *Treatment: A Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1972). p. 30—and calls it a conservative figure. According to the narcotic control division of the Department of National Health and Welfare, heroin addicts in 1971 numbered 6,696. This figure is computed by counting those who come to the attention of the police—therefore it's inevitably a low one. (American figures indicate that over 2,000,000 in the U.S.A. have tried heroin; 1,500,000 of high school age—6 per cent of all young people between 12 and 17).

Let me repeat, Sir, that 6 per cent of all young people between 12 and 17 in the United States have tried heroin. There is one point which I should like to make in passing. I am impressed by the fact—I think this is a reflection on the federal government, in terms of educational programs—that when the problem is being discussed, the discussion invariably comes around to addiction; rarely do we hear about the complications as a result of the