

Government Orders

I do not know what the Prime Minister is doing. He is letting the Minister of Finance do whatever he likes. It does not matter how much it contravenes what the Liberals have said before.

I am particularly concerned about the effect this is going to have on health care. When does it end? When will the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister get up and say to Ralph Klein in Alberta that enough is enough, that the Canada Health Act is going to be enforced, that we are going to have national standards in the country, and that all this talk about enforcing the Canada Health Act flexibly and the other kinds of things that have been spoken about will come to an end.

It is not going to come to an end. It seems to me that the Liberals have decided that the Canada Health Act is passe and that in various ways they are going to allow it to fade away. They are going to permit provinces to experiment with the dismantling of medicare.

This is something I predicted in 1984 in my final speech on the Canada Health Act. I said that if the federal government was not going to sufficiently fund medicare, sooner or later there would be pressures both from the public, from provincial governments and then in turn from the federal government to dismantle medicare.

Medicare has to be adequately funded if it is going to succeed. That is an insight which in some ways others have brought to bear on this debate. It is not just a question of having national standards. One has to have national standards and appropriate funding. If there is not the appropriate funding, for one thing the federal government cannot withdraw that funding in order to enforce standards, and for another people become disillusioned about the health care system if they feel that in spite of the standards it is not the kind of health care system they expect.

With respect to the Crow benefit and its elimination, again it is another blow not just to railways, farmers and railroaders, it is another capitulation on the part of the government to the global opposition to anything that comes in the form of a subsidy. This ideology against subsidies and against taking into account the realities of a country like Canada is something that is very dangerous for us. In many respects, Canada was built along east-west lines against natural north-south forces. If we are going to cut all the things that bind us together east and west and if we are not going to take them into account any more, we are going to end up with an entirely different country.

Maybe that is what the government wants but that is certainly not what its members said in opposition. It is something that they should be held to account for by the Canadian public.

Even in the administration of the elimination of the Crow benefit, I hope the government will soon tell us how it intends to make absolutely sure that it is the producers who receive the money that is going out as compensation for the elimination of

the Crow benefit and not landholders, as may well be the case given the current state of the legislation.

It is not enough for the government to say that the Farm Credit Corporation will make sure that producers get it. The government has to make sure that producers get it, no matter who they are, no matter who owns the land that they rent.

• (1225)

My final point is with respect to the deficit. I listened to my Reform colleague talk about the need to get a grip on the deficit and to take the deficit a lot more seriously than the government is doing.

What I would like to see both the Reform Party and the Liberal government take more seriously is the need to address the real causes of the deficit. In the judgment of NDP members, the real causes of the deficit go back to the tax loopholes which were created in the mid-1970s by a Liberal government and to the high real interest rate policy which has been followed in the country for the last 15 years. It is a combination of those tax loopholes and the high interest rate policy that has created the deficit.

It is not social spending. Social spending has not grown in the way which some have suggested. It has not been the cause of the deficit. It may well be that it will have to be part of the solution, in the sense that it is an obvious area to look at, how we spend the money and whether we could spend it more wisely. However, unless we deal with the high real interest rate policy, unless we deal with monetary policy, unless we deal with how we finance the debt, we are going to continue to have the problem. We will continue to pay out \$50 billion in interest every year.

If the interest is the problem, let us look at the interest rate policy which creates the interest we have to pay. Let us look at the role of the Bank of Canada and ask if there are not ways in which it could finance a greater portion of the national debt than it does now in the way that it used to. Let us look at the way private banks have been allowed to print and lend money to the government, at a great profit to them and at a great expense to Canadians, without having to put up the appropriate deposits.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, the hon. member's time has expired.

Mr. Blaikie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many other things I could have talked about, but ten minutes only permits so much.

Mr. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this debate is about the implementation of the federal budget. However I would like to take advantage of the occasion to pick up on a point made by the hon. member in the closing passage of his speech and look beyond the budget to examine the whole question of Canada's national debt; that constantly growing monster which requires \$44 billion annually simply to feed. As the finance minister stated in the budget, service charges on the