

*Government Orders*

hospital in New Zealand for a number of months before she could be transported back to the United States.

I ended up driving her back to the airport and she told me that she and her husband had just retired. He had to go back to the United States because he could not stay in New Zealand. They were not wealthy but they were comfortable and had been planning an active life in retirement. She said that if she had fallen in the United States they would have been financially ruined even with the fact that they had some medical coverage. They would have been absolutely financially decimated to the point that they probably would have had to file for bankruptcy. Certainly they would not have been looking forward to their retirement years with any assets or comforts.

I think Canadians should start remembering that by taking our health care system for granted we are in danger of losing it. This legislation is part of a consistent process of erosion of our national health care system.

Our health care system did not come about easily in this country. It was gained through foresight and struggle after having been introduced by Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan. It is important to remember that is where the initial and decisive fight for the establishment of medicare took place. The people who were opposed to it were very powerful people. They were the Liberal opposition and doctors. Other special interest groups staged a strike and fought desperately to try to preserve their rights and their privileges and prevent a universal health insurance system.

That battle was won and finally the federal government was forced into bringing in national medicare on a federal level.

• (1140)

This program has been successful in ensuring that all Canadians have access to a high standard of health care.

We have now had a series of attacks on this by the present Tory government. I will not go into the history of the initial 50:50 program and how that program was eroded when the block funding came in. It is important for this House and the Canadian public to understand that the present Established Programs Financing which

was put in place in the late 1970s was based on the federal government transferring to the provinces money for post-secondary education and health care. It was not based on the amount of money spent by the provinces but on the growth in population and the growth in GNP.

The federal government tried to make much of the fact that the health care costs of the provinces have gone up dramatically and they have. The federal government has tried to make much of the fact that the provinces have to contain the cost of health care and they do. The formula that has existed for transferring of moneys had nothing to do with those things. It had only to do with the increase in the GNP. If there was no increase in the GNP the federal government did not increase its contribution to the provinces other than for the increase in the population.

This government has decided to unilaterally change that formula. Being from British Columbia I figure that the government must have somehow taken lessons from the previous Socred administration in that province. Maybe it was when the hon. Minister of Justice switched from being a Socred provincially and became a Tory federally. She came down from British Columbia to Ottawa and brought the Socred way of handling their fiscal incompetence. Now it is called offloading.

The government does not bother to control its own expenditures on advertising. It does not even bother to try to control its own expenditures on the growth of government or in areas where it has direct responsibility. It simply offloaded the problems on to municipalities, school boards and hospitals by cutting their funding.

It simply said: "We know we cannot fiscally control our expenditures but what we can do is simply freeze the moneys we will transfer to other levels".

This is what the government has now adopted. The Socred approach to fiscal management is simply: "Let us offload our deficit and debt on somebody else. Let us offload on the provinces. We will simply decide that we are not going to continue with the formula for transferring of payments. We will cut back". When it got away with cutting back to 2 per cent or 3 per cent less GNP it decided to zero it. This bill now extends that zeroing for five years. It simply says: "Let us wash our hands of any