

*Government Orders*

This is not the first time this has been raised with the government. This is not the first time questions have been asked. To go back to the debates of June 4, 1991 in Question Period when the same minister was asked about the impact of cutbacks as pointed out by the National Council on Welfare, he denied that there would be any trouble.

He said: "I guess the first thing we can do to help the poor of this country is to get the deficit down". What did we hear today? On the same question, the Prime Minister was asked: "What about the indications that Quebec will get no transfer cash in five years?"

The Prime Minister, instead of acknowledging that it will be one of the major problems facing Canadian Confederation in the next while, stood up and said: "That statement is inaccurate and my hon. friend will see the numbers mentioned today are not at all justified by government projections".

We are seeing just the opposite. We are seeing one battle after another in which the same issues are raised with the government and the same denials are given. In the meantime, the country waivers in its confidence, loses its direction, loses the ability to finance its programs, loses its commitment among friends and is gradually becoming unravelled.

Each and every one of us in this House has the responsibility not to pull it apart, but to pull this government together.

Bill C-20 is the continuation of the strategy of using the stick. It takes advantage of the regulations, along with Bill C-32 and takes advantage of the Supreme Court decision to further the capping of the Canada Assistance Program, the EPF, and as well it extends federal authority to many other jurisdictions in order to ensure that if the federal government does not have the cash, it still has a say in the furthering of the health program.

I was listening very closely to the debate this morning. I share with most members of this House a concern for the future of medicare. Medicare will be the litmus test of this whole country in the 1990s. Whether we were able to finance it properly, reform it and keep it going, these will be the measures that people will use with their politicians.

In furthering the goal of protecting medicare, we cannot walk away from the other people in the system who have become dependent, and rightly so, on the federal presence. There are a number of programs which I will return to in a minute which should not be put in jeopardy because the government refuses to finance medicare properly.

If, as the minister seemed to be insinuating in his comments, the provinces are not spending the money wisely, that is an issue that this government has had seven years to raise with the provinces. To feel that the only way to teach the provinces a lesson is to use a stick against them is a failure of communication, a failure of political will and a failure to develop a tax system which people contribute to willingly because they see an objective at the end.

For these reasons I think the government's strategy has been incorrect and it is one that we oppose very strenuously.

Another part of the denial of the government is whether our system has deteriorated since 1984. If the minister had the opportunity during his busy schedule to listen to the groups that made presentations to the committee on finance, he would have seen just how many groups are unanimous in their feeling that conditions have deteriorated.

One of the more influential reports on health and social programs was just released last week and is entitled *Unequal Futures: The Legacies of Child Poverty in Canada*. The authors represent some very important groups, particularly in the Toronto region, such as the Child Poverty Action group, the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, and also from institutions such as Ryerson and York University which have a long tradition of working in the area of social policy.

This document is a series of condemnations of this government. It points out the limits of promoting equal opportunities through education, which is now part of our system as a result of cutbacks. It says also that it is widely believed in Canada "that education offers poor children the chance to overcome the limitations of their family background, having been born in poverty third gender, having been born female and their race belonging to a minority group".