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| Saskatchewan | 17e | 2e | Discours sur la santé (en assemblée) | 16 mars 1972 | Walter Smishek | Minister of Health | Saskatchewan New Democratic Party |

Mr. Speaker, I see the Hon. Member from Cannington being very anxious to find out how many hundreds of miles of roads we'll be building in his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party Government was elected to office to provide positive leadership. Leadership to overcome the consequences of seven years of Liberal mismanagement, leadership to get Saskatchewan back on the road to progress, leadership to prove to the people of Saskatchewan that public programs and government can be well organized, responsive and effective. The Budget presented a week ago by the Hon. Premier is positive proof of the leadership we are providing of effective government organization, responsive to the needs of the people, ensuring the people that they will get their best value for their tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, during the last election the Liberal Party and their defeated colleagues resorted to fear tactics to undermine the public confidence in the New Democratic Party. In their panic the Liberals ran around the Province and to the Press talking about all the Public Service dismissals that would take place and other terrible acts that would follows with the election of an NDP Government. Mr. Speaker, this nonsense has got to be the biggest joke of this Session. Just think about it. There are the Liberals talking about the mass dismissals that would follow the election of the NDP Government when it was those very same Liberals who proudly announced to the public that their Government had fired between 100 and 150 public servants in the first six months of their office. It was the same Liberal Government which publicly scorned the public servants. It was the same Liberal Government that drove out hundreds of most able public servants from the Province of Saskatchewan in 1964. Mr. Speaker, it was the same Government which held down the wages of public servants, the same Government which introduced arbitrary and meaningless restrictions on the awarding of merit salary increases to civil servants. The Liberal Government's relationship with the workers of Saskatchewan was so bad that Saskatchewan faced one strike after another during their seven years of office. Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the former Government Members with such poor performance would dare to raise the issue of public confidence.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the NDP record in the last eight months. Obviously since the former Liberal Government had padded the public payroll with their friends, some dismissals were necessary with the change in Government. Early in this Session the Premier tabled in the House a complete list of all public servants who were dismissed by the Government. This list totaled only 31 employees. Most of these employees had the right of appeal on their dismissal. I must point out, Mr. Speaker, that in no case was the right of appeal exercised by the dismissed employee. I suggest to this House that the Members draw their own conclusions why the employees did not appeal their dismissals. No one in the Government service has been dealt with unjustly. Where some of our program changes made certain jobs redundant, we made every effort to find alternative employment in other Government departments and agencies for the incumbent employees. We are proud of the way we have been able to deal with our public employees, Mr. Speaker.

You know that the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Association represents about 5,500 employees in government departments and agencies and another 2,000 in the, labor service. This is a total of about 7,500 employees. We have negotiated new contracts with this union and these negotiations were conducted in an atmosphere of trust and confidence. The new agreements called for an increase in salaries of eight per cent in the first year and seven per cent in the second year of the two year collective bargaining agreement. The salary increases to the public employees are higher than given by any Liberal administration. Salary settlements will narrow the gap between the wage rates paid by the Saskatchewan Government and other Governments in Canada and particularly our two neighboring provinces to the east and the west of us. Our public servants also were awarded improved annual vacation benefits and other important changes in the general terms of their collective bargaining agreements. We have negotiated equally fair and reasonable contracts with the Canadian Union of Public Employees and unions of several of the Crown corporations. The number of additional employees affected by these substantial improvement benefits are in the order of 6,700. Mr. Speaker, we have been equally successful in our bargaining with other unions. At the time I took office as Minister of Public Health the former Government left with us 19 unsettled hospital contracts. I should like you to note that within six months of taking office, all contracts were settled peacefully and there were no strikes and no strike votes taken.

If the Liberals had bargained in good faith they too might have been able to have a success record but the fact is that the Liberals despised collective bargaining and resorted to smear tactics of employee unions. Mr. Speaker, when we were elected we promised to raise the minimum wage to $1.75 per hour and by appropriate steps increase this to $2 an hour. This was a four year commitment by the New Democratic Party. Our Government set an example by raising the minimum wage for the public employees and the hospital employees to $2 per hour effective October 1, 1972. In respect of labor and public service the NDP record is one of positive action.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Athabasca (Mr. Guy) during his participation in this debate, made refererr e that what the Budget proposes is to build a larger bureaucracy. He suggested that the new Budget proposes the creation of some 800 new jobs. I would in particular like the Hon. Member from Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod) to pay attention to this because he made some of the same kind of references and since he is the Budget critic I would suggest to him that he do a little more work on studying the Estimates and familiarizing himself with really what the Budget and the Estimates are all about.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall that when the Liberal Government took office in 1964 they said that what they would do is reduce the bureaucracy. They said that they would trim all the fat that there was around the Government. They said they would cut unnecessary expenditure and streamline the Government. Well, Mr. Speaker, how well did they do? How did they trim the fat?

I have with me, Mr. Speaker, a list by all departments and the number of employees that were employed in these departments on June 30, 1964. Those that were permanent employees, those who were on probation and those who were appointed by Order-in Council. The list here shows 7,086 employees on June 30, 1964 and on June 30, 1971, the same group, there were 7,591.

Now, in the case of temporary employees - remember these are employees who are also working full time but are listed as temporaries - June 30, 1964, 698, June 30, 1971, 1,145, an increase of 65 per cent in temporary jobs, Mr. Speaker. In total the increase in the case of the Public Service and as I said excluding the labour service of 952 or a percentage increase of 12 per cent. Nov;, Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals talk about employees and that the employees have been living in fear and insecurity when we took office, may I suggest to them that there was no group that lived in more fear and less security than those, 1,145 temporary employees. May I also advise the Budget critic that it is true that the number of employees are going to increase but what we are doing is reducing the list of 1,145 temporary employees and including them in the regular service.

It is this group that has not been listed in the Estimates in the past, the temporary employees will now be listed. It is time that these employees got some security. Some of them have been on temporary employment under the Liberal administration for a period of seven years, if you please. Seven years on temporary employment. The majority of that 1,145 group have worked for two, three, four, five and up to seven years, Mr. Speaker. We propose to absorb many of these employees into the permanent Public Service. True, there will be more employees shown in the Estimates but the fact is that the employment will not increase. It is about time these employees got some security. The cost to the Government will not increase since the wages are not affected except that they will come under the scope of the superannuation plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is what we propose to do and I would suggest that the Hon. Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod) also advise his colleague from Athabasca (Mr. Guy) of where the increase is.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to refer to the Liberal accusation that the NDP Government is too concerned with planning. During the election campaign the Liberals tried to suggest that there was something wrong with a government that plans. Since taking office I have become fully aware of just how much the Liberals did not believe in planning. They did not have any plans except they had some form of a plan worked out with McLaren Agencies of how they might get re-elected but even this plan did not work as we all know.

Because of the former Government not believing and not bothering with planning, they created chaos with many of our public services. One example of the disorganized state of the Liberal Government's capital public building program was urgently brought to my attention with a matter of a few days of taking office. The Liberals had begun to build the South Saskatchewan Hospital Centre at a cost of $16 million. In order to stimulate the economy just prior to the election, they proposed to start construction and began digging a basement for the Regina Technical Institute located right behind the South Saskatchewan Hospital. Their plan called for a technical institute to cost in the order of eight and a half million dollars. In typical Liberal form they had merely set these two huge buildings down in the middle of a field. They had not asked the Wascana Centre Authority or the Public Works Department for any coordinated plans for services in the area. Oh yes, there was another public works scheme. They immediately started, because of an election, started building the over-pass on the way to to the hospital crossing No.1 Highway. Once it crossed the highway it came to a dead end because the Liberals had not acquired enough property to provide ~ road to allow people to get to the hospital and the technical institute. Can you imagine, . Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Government had committed itself to spend nearly $25 million on buildings. Thousands of people would have to have access to these buildings on a daily basis and the Liberals had not even provided a road to get the people to these facilities.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government immediately took action to acquire additional property for road construction so that these two huge facilities could be used by the people. In buying sufficient land for the road we looked at the future and decided to extend the boundaries of the Wascana Centre for future public needs. We are planning now for tomorrow and for the future and for our children and the future of their children that will follow.

Mr. Speaker, planning is our Government's view of using one's brains. The NDP Government intends to plan. A Liberal Government didn't believe in planning. Let the people decide which is the right course of action.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to turn your attention now to the resource allocation for health services. We all recognize that resources for health are scarce. The challenge for the NDP leadership is to utilize these scarce resources to obtain greater benefits for all people. I believe that domination of expenditures for hospital and physician services has encouraged people to think that Saskatchewan has a health service because it pays a lot of money to overcome sickness. As I have said many times before, we do not have a health service in Saskatchewan, nor in any other province in the Dominion of Canada, we have a sickness service. To illustrate this point, you can get an idea of the imbalance in resource allocation by looking at the number of employees working in sickness services as opposed to preventive health service. There were 13,480 hospital workers in treatment programs in Saskatchewan in 1971 excluding those in private practice and non-governmental organizations, but there were only 460 employees employed in the public preventive program. As you can see, only 3.4 per cent of our health workers are directly involved in preventive health programs, that type of program which I call a health service. In dollar terms, in 1970 71 only 2.8 per cent of the total Provincial expenditure for health services was assigned to preventive health service.

Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of our Government to develop programs which will assist all the people to remain healthy so that they do not require the expensive treatment service, but when people do become sick we shall assist them to overcome their health difficulties without discrimination or penalty. I'm aware, Mr. Speaker, that the development of programs to help people remain healthy requires a great deal of effort. It requires substantial change in our health delivery system. Because it will take time to create a health service in Saskatchewan and obtain the benefits of a healthy society, we, as a Government, must take action in the meantime to provide treatment services as efficiently as possible.

We do not want to waste our resources in unnecessary services or duplicated programs. We will attempt, wherever possible, to rechannel the cost savings from our treatment services into programs for health services. We shall be looking for real cost savings through operating efficiently. We have already demonstrated that the NDP Government will not tolerate the Liberal health financing tactics of taxing the sick, limiting the number of hospital and physician services to the people.

I have already informed the House of the substantial list of taxes that our Government has already removed from the sick, the total is in excess of $11 million. The cost of providing health and hospital and physicians' services in Saskatchewan are alarming. Let me illustrate, Mr. Speaker. We expect to spend $178.5 million dollars for health services in 1972. This is $192 for every man, woman and child in this province. When we examined these expenditures we realized that the most costly program is our hospital services. For the first time the hospital program will cost over $100 million. Hospital services have been increasing at a rate of 10 per cent per year not counting extraordinary program changes. I think the people of Saskatchewan should know, Mr. Speaker, that I was recently provided with an estimate of costs of providing hospital services in Saskatchewan for 1981. I was told that it would cost close to $215 million to provide hospital services within the nine year period. I was cautioned that the cost estimate might be low. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, that this kind of information has caused me to start doing some serious thinking and looking at what can be done about having some controls on the costs or at least shift the program in a way that our costs will not escalate that rapidly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention to mat bas been happening and where the costs have been rising. I looked at the period from 1960 to 1970 and looked at what has happened. The number of hospital beds has increased by about 600. This is an increase of slightly more than nine per cent in a 10-year period. The average number of patients in hospital at any point in time has not changed significantly since 1960. The population of Saskatchewan has increased only slightly, however, the number of employees in hospitals has increased by 22.6 per cent, that is from 8,742 in 1960 to 10,722 in 1970. The number of administrative staff increased by 25.5 per cent, the number of professional nurses has increased by 38 per cent, the other nursing personnel over 40 percent, the number of employees performing diagnostic services has increased by 42 percent. What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that although we have more hospital beds in Saskatchewan, there are no more patients at the present time. In addition, since salaries account for about 70 percent of the total expenditure of hospitals, the increase in the number of staff and the quality of staff accounts for much of the rapid increase in cost acceleration. There are other things that should be known.

Mr. Speaker, how many people know that in 1972 it will cost close to $14 million to run the University Hospital? How many people realize that it will cost more than $12 million to operate the Regina General Hospital in 1972. How many people realize that when they spend one day in the University Hospital it will cost $77.64 on the average for the bed and related services. Then, naturally there are the additional costs of physicians' services. Do you realize that if you go across here to the Regina General Hospital and spend a day in a bed in a general ward on the average it will cost in 1972 $49.66 per day?

Mr. Speaker, I doubt whether the citizens of Saskatoon know that the Government presently pays almost $2.5 million a year for laboratory services in that city. There is considerable duplication on laboratory services among these three hospitals and the major private laboratories in that city.

A recent study of the situation indicated that if we merely rationalized and co-ordinated the lab services in Saskatoon we can realize substantial savings. Mr. Speaker, the lab services in Saskatoon cost four and a half times more than the Liberals saved by closing 11 hospitals in our small communities. A Government which would close hospitals thereby reducing the availability of hospital services to many residents while allowing wasteful duplication of services in major centres deserves the fate of the electorate of this province that they gave them on June 23rd.

Our Government will strive for true savings, for greater efficiency and elimination of waste in all areas of hospital programs. What is important for the people of Saskatchewan to know is that they cannot wait any longer before taking definitive action to stop the unacceptable rate of increases for hospital and physician services. Mr. Speaker, this is particularly so in the light of the Federal Government proposing to alter and change drastically the cost sharing formula. Time does not permit, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the Federal proposals, but it does mean that if it were accepted, Saskatchewan would be losing about $13 million a year if that formula was accepted that the Federal Government has proposed.

Mr. Speaker, since becoming Minister of Public Health I have been asked by a great many people if I intend to alter the method of remuneration to physicians. I have explained to these individuals as well as to the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Saskatchewan Medical Association that I am anxious to explore alternative methods of payments for physicians' services. I was pleased to read in the January issue of the Canadian Medical Association Journal that the Saskatchewan Medical Association, this doctors' group in our province is, in fact, in favor of alternative payment studies. Dr. Hindmarsh, President of the Saskatchewan Medical Association was quoted as saying that he favors experimentation in the area of alternative methods of payment for physicians' services. In the same article, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Deering, the Executive Director of the Group Health Association of American had this to say about the fee for service system. Let me quote, the whole system of compensating doctors through a schedule of fee for service rendered at the time of illness puts a premium on illness rather than on health. It provides for more incentive for technical procedures in surgery than to the practice of preventive medicine.

Mr. Speaker, we have been actively exploring alternative methods of payment. I would like this House to know that I shall be advising the Members about our definitive action in this regard in a few weeks of time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw attention to the Estimates and the improvement for the cities of Saskatoon and Regina in the per capita grants for preventive health service. The per capita grants are being increased from $1.25 to $1.50 per capita. In the Estimates the absolute dollar amounts to the two cities have not increased by 20 per cent. I would like the Members of this House to know that in recent years the population estimates of the cities of Saskatoon and Regina were inflated. The Provincial grants accordingly were larger than they should have been. This year the census data is now available and the population was found to be lower than the previous estimate. Naturally the Provincial grants to the cities would have been lower and would have undermined their progress. I can assure the Members of this House that there is a 20 per cent increase in per capita from $1.25 to $1.50.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I should like particularly to make note of this year's Budget in regard to the alcohol program. This aspect of health has become a relatively major concern over the last few years. The incidence of this disease has by all techniques of measurement shown significant increase. The Government is concerned about this health program and will substantially increase the grant to the Alcoholism Commission to extend its rehabilitation services. The larger grant will enable the Commission to provide in-patient services in the Saskatoon rehabilitation centre. Up until now only out-patient services have been available in Saskatoon. The grant to the Alcoholism Commission will amount to $887,000. This is an increase of more than one-quarter of a million dollars or just about 40 per cent over the previous year. The greatly increased grant will also permit, for the first time, the development of an alcoholism program for persons of native ancestry. $120,000 is allocated in this respect. Mr. Speaker, in order to strengthen the Alcoholism Commission it is my proposal that the Commission be enlarged from the present eight to 12. I should like to see the new appointments to the Commission to include the views of employers, employees, native people and women. The appointments that I shall make to this Commission will ensure that these additional viewpoints are heard.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard mutterings from some Members that financing provision has not been made for chiropractic services, particularly the Member for Lumsden (Mr. Lane). I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that nearly $1 million has been provided in the budget for this program. I suggest that some Hon. Members study their Estimates more carefully to locate these items.

Mr. Speaker, I will oppose the amendment and I will support the original motion.