

News From Knowles

March, in Ottawa, has been a depressing month. Winter has lingered too long and spring seems reluctant to make its appearance. However, this has been a busy month for your M.P. The mail has been heavier; unemployment insurance problems still consume a lot of time; there were passports to deal with; and the committee work has become increasingly heavy as we study the government spending estimates. In spite of these duties, one must also keep up attendance in the House.

I had the opportunity to speak in the debate on the government's handling of the unemployment insurance, pensions of all types and the quality of life in general. Space does not permit a complete text of my speech, but I did emphasize the breakdown in communication between the claimants of benefits under unemployment insurance and the Regional Office in Hamilton. People were just not getting their cheques on time. I also pointed out that this placed a greater burden on the welfare system of the local municipalities.

In Private Members' hour, on Friday of last week, Barry Mather N.D.P. Member from British Columbia, introduced his Private Bill C-10 which was an act to restrain the use of tobacco. On rather short notice I entered the debate and put forward as vigorously as possible the viewpoints of the tobacco farmers of our area. The bill sought to restrain the use of tobacco by juveniles, and this I agreed with. However, I did disagree strongly with the suggestion that tobacco is the number one health hazard for Canadian people.

I argued that if the same energy was exerted to gather statistics on the use of alcohol it would be clearly demonstrated that the dangers of tobacco smoking pale into insignificance in comparison with the ravages caused by overindulgence of alcoholic beverages.

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There seems to be a pattern evolving in the House of Commons with Liberal government members who have become disillusioned with the policies of the Trudeau government. Remember Perry Ryan, Paul Hellyer and Eric Kierans?

This month another Liberal backbencher, Raymond Rock from Quebec, announced in the Commons that he was leaving the Liberal Party and was joining the Progressive Conservative Party. Dramatically he crossed the floor of the House, shook hands with our Leader, Mr. Stanfield, and took his seat among the Progressive Conservative members.

In an answer to a question from Mr. Stanfield concerning the

Auditor General's report, Mr. Trudeau accused the Auditor General of breaking the law in not having his report before the House in the required time. Such an accusation brought forth a storm of protest from all Opposition Parties in the House, the news media across Canada, and the Canadian public generally.

Everyone was particularly annoyed because the present government had reduced the salaries of the staff available to Mr. Henderson. They had so down graded his staff that it was impossible to obtain the services of competent auditors to possibly do his work on time. How then could he possibly produce his report on time.

The upshot of the

whole matter was that Mr. Henderson was able to appear before the Public Accounts Committee who, after hearing the evidence, have recommended that given adequate staff to properly scrutinize the spending of the Federal government.

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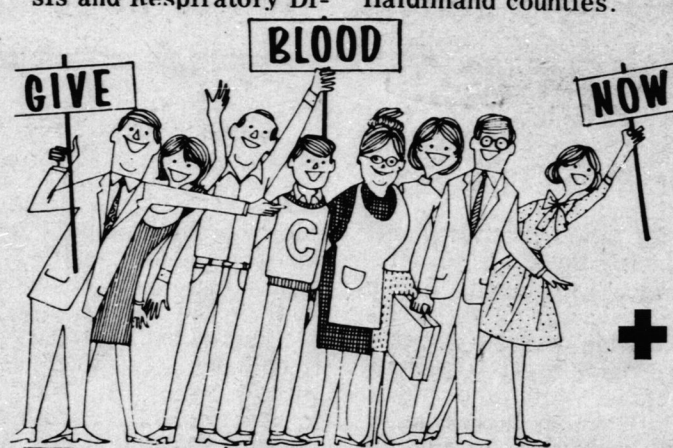
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