

Hon Sir ROGER DOUGLAS (ACT): This year, 54c in every dollar of personal tax goes towards health care. The growth is scary. Two years ago, only 41c in every dollar of personal tax was required to pay for health care. In other words, in 2 years the figure has increased by 13c in the dollar of what we pay in personal tax.

Saying that the figure is 54c in every dollar of personal tax can hide what it really means. Let me explain. Someone who earns the minimum wage pays about \$2,500 every year for health care. Someone who earns the average wage pays about \$6,000 every year for health care. People say that health care in this country is free. It is not free. To me it seems that health care has never been more expensive. Health care is not free; it costs each of us. When health care costs a person on the average wage \$6,000 every year, one would hope that it would at least deliver. Yet it does not deliver, and I want to know what the Minister intends to do about it.

Despite the enormous cost of health care, we ration it. Sick people are placed on a waiting list. While they are on the waiting list their health gets worse, and in some cases they even die. The suffering that takes place while people are on waiting lists is rationalised away, especially under a Labour Government, and by the Greens in particular, as if the goal of equality justifies denying health care to people who are in desperate need of it.

The most pernicious effect of socialised medicine in this country is the creation of a group of second-class citizens. It does that, firstly, by having a bizarre mixture of subsidies; some things are fully subsidised and others are not subsidised at all. Secondly, it allows pressure to be applied to the system in order to get treatments performed. For example, if people can appear on television—on a programme like *Holmes*—no doubt they will get their treatment. But if people are not in a group that can bring special pressure to bear, then they will suffer on the waiting list. The third way that we create second-class citizens is due to the fact that the wealthy can afford to pay twice via health insurance. So we have a situation in this country whereby the very people who miss out on health care are the very people whom universal health-care is supposed to help. While the poor die on the waiting list, the rich and the influential get treatment. No one would seriously say that the system treats people equally.

The solution offered to the problem by every party in this House, other than ACT, is the same. That solution is to throw more money at the problem. In 2 years we have increased the amount of money that goes into health care from 41c in every dollar we pay in personal tax to 54c in the dollar. Where will it be in another 2 years? Will it be 67c in the dollar? Is that really a system that is sustainable? Of course it is not. People say we can solve the problem by allocating more money, but that is nothing more than snake oil.