

The Address—Mr. Low

On the basis of the estimated cost of a national health plan made by the advisory committee which reported in 1943, the cost of a health program would now come to approximately \$492 million. This of course takes into consideration the increase in population and the increase in the cost of living since that estimate was made. In the Saskatchewan health survey report, tabled in this house, the amount estimated for a nation-wide health plan was \$450 million. It is obviously difficult to estimate exactly what a health program would cost at this point. But even if a national health plan cost \$600 million, as some have suggested, there would be a saving in money, in suffering, in anguish and in early death for many Canadians that would more than compensate for any expenditure we might make.

My time has expired. I would press the amendment which I have had the privilege of moving.

Mr. Solon E. Low (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, first I should like to concur in what was said this afternoon by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) and the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) about that part of His Excellency's address which announces that the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth is to take place next June. We wish at this time to reaffirm our loyalty and devotion to the crown and all for which the crown stands in the British commonwealth and concept of living. I should also like to agree with the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) in all that he had to say about the quality of the fighting forces of Canada. They are doing a wonderful job and are discharging their responsibility well. The only tragic part of the whole situation in which these boys are placed is that they have to continue to fight a limited war for an unlimited period of time. We sincerely hope that some way will be found to bring this terrible Korean situation to an early end. Our prayers will be devoted to that end.

I should also like to commend the efforts of the mover (Mr. Deslières) and the seconder (Mr. Schneider) of the address in reply to the speech from the throne. They performed their duties capably. In fact they were very persuasive. They made what is virtually a bag of dry bones look like grain-fed western red brand beef, and that is pretty good.

I should like to say a word or two about the proposal contained in the amendments moved by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) and the leader of the C.C.F. party (Mr. Coldwell) with respect to a national health plan. In our view there is no greater asset

to any nation than the health of the people. Consequently every effort should be made by the people individually, and collectively through their governments, to achieve a high national standard of health and well-being. A mistake which the socialists often make is in thinking that a worthy objective of that kind can be reached through government action alone. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There simply could not be any high standard of health, even with everything an all-powerful government could do, if the individuals of the nation were not prepared to learn how to look after themselves, how to exercise restraint and use wisdom in their manner of living, and do all in their power to produce and make available health-giving foods in sufficient quantity to fill the nation's needs.

Another mistake socialists everywhere have made in the past is that, although they have laid great stress on careful planning, they have been overeager to catapult the nation or state into comprehensive health or hospitalization schemes before the means were available or the facilities were ready for them. We believe that they ought to have learned something as a result of the tragic errors that have been made in this and other countries in that respect. Social Credit Alberta launched out sixteen years ago on the beginning of a health improvement and insurance program. That program has seen continual expansion and development along very sound lines until today Albertans enjoy a very substantial measure of health services, without doubt the best to be found in Canada.

The provincial government is determined to develop that scheme as fast as it can. We believe that a national health program, built on the model of the Alberta one, is desirable and possible. Its objective should be to make it possible for every Canadian, irrespective of means, to obtain hospitalization, medical, dental and optical services and along with them a sound health education with emphasis on preventive or what are known as prophylactic measures—all of these of course to the fullest extent of need. But, sir, if such a national plan or program is to endure and succeed in its aims it must develop more or less gradually and not be imposed upon the nation in one fell swoop by an overanxious power-hungry junta of centralizers. The kind of national health program we propose would develop as rapidly as production expansion and resources development would make it possible without creating an avalanche of tax increases and without plaguing the nation with the sort of embarrassment that has almost universally followed the imposition of socialist programs