

*Medicare*

I am in favour of a medicare plan, but a plan that respects the rights and prerogatives of the provinces, since this is within the realm of the provinces. And I would like to have the support of the other Liberal members for the province of Quebec so that we may convince their colleagues sitting on the treasury benches that they should leave to the Quebec government that which belongs to Quebec.

If the present Liberal government really wants to establish a harmonious relationship between the various levels of government here in Canada, they must respect the rights of others if they want others to respect their own prerogatives.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I will repeat to the Liberal members opposite: take the same stand as you did when you were in opposition.

• (9:50 p.m.)

[*English*]

**Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Mr. Speaker, as all other hon. members have done, I want to begin with the premise that I believe sincerely in the principle of providing a medical care plan to everyone in Canada regardless of his or her ability to pay. I believe that everyone in the house is in favour of providing assistance for those in our country who are unable for one reason or another to provide for themselves and their families, particularly with medical services. I do not believe any hon. member would disagree with this principle, nor have I heard it so stated.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have to examine why there is a difference of opinion on the manner in which such a plan should be put into effect. In the first place this difference is a philosophical one existing among the parties, as to whether there should be a universal plan compulsory on everyone in the country or whether there should be freedom of choice for those who wish to provide themselves with medical services insurance.

In my own view we must first provide for those who cannot support themselves, second, for those with low income, and finally for those who can provide for themselves. I do not believe it necessary to jump into a medicare plan providing for all three strata of our economy. As I will explain later, the very fact that the government has seen fit to postpone the introduction of this plan for a further year for economic reasons proves that it could be done by degrees, and that it could be done in accordance with a plan such as

obtains in the province of Ontario and in two other provinces. If this were done, we could have medicare by July 1, 1967 for everyone in Canada unable to provide it for themselves.

I agree with the amendment that is now before the house—and you would rather expect me to do that, Mr. Speaker. It is not difficult to do so, however, because I support it both philosophically and politically. I wish I could look for some support for the amendment from hon. members on the government side. If there are any free enterprisers left over there they have not made themselves obvious as yet although it may be that before the debate is over someone who feels strongly about it will say so. However, as far as I can gather, any free enterprisers in the Liberal party have lost the battle and they are now marching down the road with the others and with their friends in the New Democratic Party. I do hope there are some left, even if we do not hear from them.

This amendment has been described as being against medicare. In the first days it was described in one of the newspapers as a roadblock to the present bill. I think that fundamentally medical and health services are provincial matters. Medical services, medical training and the licensing of doctors, are all provincial affairs. The provision of hospitals in which the doctors train and practise is also a provincial affair. The ancillary services such as public health units, sanitation inspection and nurses' training are also provincial affairs. The provinces now provide medical services for the aged, the ill and the indigent. Four provinces are now providing prepaid medical services under individual plans in which provision is made for free medical care for those unable to pay.

It is interesting to note, as has already been pointed out by another speaker, that in spite of the fact that the present Liberal party appears so anxious to inaugurate a medical care plan in Canada, none of the four provincial plans now in effect was brought in by a Liberal administration. I presume the federal government is trying to make up for these deficiencies. Nevertheless, fundamentally this is a provincial matter and that is where these plans should begin.

Under these circumstances it seems incomprehensible to me that the government is going ahead with this bill without the full agreement of the provincial governments. If the government wishes to consult the provinces and to see medical plans established