

*Medicare*

has gone on to do his level best to prevent medicare coming into effect. The Progressive Conservative party to my right has introduced provisions in its amendment which it knows will delay medicare until after the millennium if the Liberals are left to introduce it.

I suggest though that there are provinces in this country whose governments have not dared to wait until the Liberal party or, for that matter, the Conservative party, is prepared to take action. The minister and Liberals across the way like the hon. member for York-Scarborough (Mr. Stanbury), who spoke last evening, have attacked medicare by first of all watering down its principles and then by endeavouring to have it postponed indefinitely.

Members of the official opposition have attacked medicare by sheltering behind the undoubtedly serious shortage of doctors and the fact that the premier of Ontario does not like the present legislation. Mr. Justice Hall has often been quoted during this discussion, but there is one statement of his in particular which has not been given, and I intend to read it now because it underlies so much of the report. I read now from Volume I, the first report of the commission, page 91:

While we are aware that shortages of physicians, dentists, nurses, and other paramedical personnel will make it difficult to establish the full personal health services program our charter envisages, nonetheless the fact that there are shortages must not be used as an excuse to delay initiating programs and plans.

Mr. Justice Hall was appointed by the Conservative government. His name has been used today to prove that medicare should be delayed. It has been used by the Conservative party for this purpose. But Mr. Justice Hall has said that the fact that there is a shortage of medical personnel must not be used to delay the institution of medicare. I commend this section of the report to those who sit in the Conservative party to my right.

*[Translation]*

The Cr ditistes base their attack, just like the Ontario Conservatives, on the fact that the premier of their province does not like the federal bill. Therefore, they oppose it too.

*[English]*

Social Credit members do the same thing only in their case it is the premiers of Alberta and British Columbia who are mentioned. I do not think they should be too sure about Premier Bennett. He has a well known habit of opposing a certain measure until he

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finds out that the people are likely to change the government if he does not himself put it into effect. Then he takes up the measure as if it had been his own plan from the beginning. As soon as public opinion in British Columbia in favour of medicare becomes stronger, and it is growing stronger every day, we shall find Mr. Bennett preparing to advocate medicare as a plan which has been his baby since the beginning of time. That is the way he does things in British Columbia.

So many people pretend to be friends of medicare, those who would water it down, those who would delay it, those who shelter behind the shortage of doctors, those who shelter behind the fact that provincial premiers do not want it. In the meantime they are killing it by whatever means they can.

I say to the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) that had the federal government acted years ago we would not have experienced this difficulty with the provincial premiers. It is because the Liberal government refused to take action that the provincial premiers, one after the other, have been obliged to do the best they could according to their lights to meet the needs of the people in their provinces by bringing in what they thought would be a stopgap measure until such time as Ottawa moved. Had the government in Ottawa moved years ago to bring a proper scheme into operation we would never have been faced with the 67 varieties we now see scattered around the provinces. The longer hon. gentlemen opposite postpone the implementation of a genuine medicare program the greater their difficulties will be, because other provincial premiers, according to the resources available to them, will build the best things they can into their schemes and every one of these variations will have to be interpreted and dealt with separately. It will be exceedingly difficult for the federal government to undo the harm which its procrastination has made inevitable.

There is one province in this country which believes in genuine medicare and which has proven its belief in medicare by instituting it. That is the province of Saskatchewan—I do not intend to be modest about it. Saskatchewan was the first province to introduce medicare, back in 1962, and, if there is no other memorial to my leader, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), the fact that this program was first introduced in a province which is not one of the wealthy provinces, not one having the largest number of medical personnel, not one with the largest