

Medicare

on its merits to speak up clearly and forcibly. It is also the privilege and duty of those who support it, but have objections to its postponement, to use restraint and reason in their attack.

A spokesman for the New Democratic Party said that all members of that group would be taking part in the debate. I suggest that their position could be well stated by a small number of chosen advocates, thus saving a considerable amount of valuable parliamentary time for other priority legislation such as the announced government plan to provide a minimum monthly guaranteed income of \$105 for our needy senior citizens. If members of the N.D.P. are sincere in wishing medicare to pass quickly and easily, the present debate would be a splendid opportunity for registering objections to the postponement of its application as concisely as possible while enthusiastically supporting the measure in principle and giving the government its proper credit for introducing one of the most progressive pieces of social reform ever to brighten this house.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr Speaker, I gladly use my first words to give the government the credit which is its due for bringing in legislation which in my view has more importance for my constituents and for the people of Canada generally than any legislation that has come before the house in the few years during which I have been here. If I have a few slightly critical, even conceivably, partisan words to say at the end of my remarks, I hope the hon. member will forgive me for allowing a partisan note to creep into my observations.

It has always seemed to me to be plain common sense that the right to health services to minimize the ills the flesh is heir to, is a universal right. It is the mark of a civilized community to provide these scientific and healing services to all through the provision of what we now call medicare. I recall that our sister dominion of New Zealand pioneered in this field in the '30's. Many European countries have for decades regarded the provision of medicare as one of the basic functions of government. In Britain the Labour party provided for universal medicare services in the '40's in the midst—I call this to the attention of the house—of daunting economic problems caused by the second world war.

I have always been proud to be a member of the party which, when it formed the government in Saskatchewan, was the first

[Mr. Tolmie.]

government in North America to provide universal and comprehensive medicare service. This was done in the face of highly organized opposition and perhaps, as the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Woolliams) suggested, to their immediate political disadvantage. If it was to their political disadvantage at that time, all the more credit to them that they had the gumption to bring it in.

I subscribe to the words in the preamble to the charter of the World Health Organization:

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

I subscribe also to the words of the Hall Royal Commission on Health Services:

The commission is convinced that quite apart from humanitarian considerations the health of Canadians is a matter of concern to us as a nation, and no enlightened government can ignore that the economic capacity of its citizens to be productive depends upon their health and vigour as much as upon their educational attainment.

I consider this to be relevant when we come to consider the postponement of this plan for so-called economic reasons.

Then there is the statement of Sir Arthur Newsholme which the commission accepted:

Civilized communities have arrived at two conclusions from which there will be no retreat, though their full realization in experience has nowhere been completely achieved.

In the first place, the health of every individual is a social concern and responsibility, and secondly as following from this, medical care in its widest sense for every individual is an essential condition of maximum efficiency and happiness in a civilized community.

I accept the recommendations of the Hall commission that these objectives of national policy can only be achieved through a comprehensive universal health services program for the Canadian people financed through prepayment arrangements. Such a plan must be comprehensive and universal and, in accordance with our constitutional situation, it must be provincially administered, though it would be financed, as the present legislation proposes, in substantial part by federal grants. I accept furthermore the sense of urgency which impelled the commission to call for a federal-provincial health services conference within six months of the publication of the report in 1964, and for prompt action thereafter.

Fortunately there is no need for us to be unduly concerned about the details of what appropriate action is needed or whether the Canadian economy is able to bear the burden