

Medicare

with the plan, the federal government intends to pull the rug from under them—to turn the responsibility for financing it over to them and offer a per capita grant unrelated to the service rendered. Why not make a per capita grant available now and allow each province to develop the medicare plan best suited to its needs?

In conclusion, let me say that I recognize the need for expanded medical services to all people, regardless of their financial status. We cannot offer expanded services unless we have a great many more trained medical doctors available, more trained paramedical personnel, more hospital beds. The government should have given priority to the supply of sufficient facilities and personnel before introducing this plan.

• (9:20 p.m.)

I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that the minister can explain to us how he intends to ensure an adequate supply of these doctors before July 1, 1968. A federal-provincial conference on medicare should be convened immediately so that he can determine from the provinces the type of federal assistance which is needed and is acceptable for the discharge of a purely provincial responsibility—medical services.

Mr. William Dean Howe (Hamilton South): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I should first like to comment on a statement made by the hon. member for York-Scarborough (Mr. Stanbury) who claimed that the New Democratic Party was going to filibuster the bill and thereby hold it up. I think he will have to agree that no political party fought longer and harder for the inception of medicare than did the New Democratic Party. This has not been a fight; it has been a series of promises—47 years of promises which have resulted in a bill which, before it got to the floor of the House of Commons, has already been delayed. So the N.D.P. can hardly be accused of delaying a bill which the Liberals themselves are delaying.

Another matter on which I should like to comment is the old cliché, that there is insufficient personnel to handle medicare at the present time, used by the last two Conservative speakers, the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Hees) and the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Ballard). I am fed up with this old cliché. This only proves to me the need for medicare. It is an admission that there are people who are not being medically treated, but who should be,

and that this failure is due to the fact that we have not had a medicare program to take care of these people, rather than the lack of medical people. This is dividing people into two categories, and results in a condition wherein treatment for illness is dependent upon the financial status of the patient.

I should also like to make one comment in respect of the statement made by the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Patterson). I do not agree with him when he suggests that integration is more important than medication.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I did not say that. I said that unification was something that was more urgent in that it was to come into effect in a very short time, whereas the government has stated that medicare would not take place for a year and a half.

Mr. Howe (Hamilton South): It is hoped that by debating this thing we might possibly get it into effect before 1968. I think it is still more important that we get medicare before us and in effect in this country before we get integration and unification of the armed forces. It is therefore with mixed emotions that I speak on this medicare bill. My emotions are mixed because I am glad to see it get to the floor of the house after these years of promises, but I am not happy to hear of its intended postponement which so far as I am concerned is an act of deceit perpetrated upon the Canadian people. It does show the influence the right wing element in the Liberal party has over the whole party, when this smaller group has had the power to sway the rest of the party. Since it has been promised on many occasions that this country would have medicare by July 1, 1967 most particularly within the cabinet of the Liberal party there must be some sort of small right wing element which has been able to deceive the Canadian people.

I have spoken many times on the different aspects of medicare. I have spoken in the House of Commons and elsewhere pointing out the need for medicare. But this is not what is at stake tonight; rather, it is the disappointing postponement of it with which we are confronted at the present time. I have deliberately planned a play-back of some voices—Liberal voices I might say—to emphasize what an impact this callous postponement of the medicare program must have had on millions of Canadians who, like myself, listened to these voices and dared to hope.