

Medicare

from the principle of universal coverage, nevertheless has done right in rejecting the solicitations made to it by some of the provinces that they should be allowed to come into the plan with existing so-called voluntary programs from which a high percentage of the population is excluded.

• (4:00 p.m.)

I should like to refer to an editorial which appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* some time ago relating to the position of the Conservative party on the issue of a public medicare plan. I cannot find the editorial at the moment but as I recall it was to the effect that it is very difficult to ascertain just what is the position of the Conservative party on this important issue. I do not know whether this is a fair comment, but I do know that certain members of that group have come out quite unequivocally for the kind of public medical care plan that was recommended by the Hall royal commission. We have, of course, seen much comment in editorials in the press quoting the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) with regard to what his position is.

Mr. Diefenbaker: My position has been made clear many times.

Mr. Schreyer: Yes; as I say, it is quite clear and unequivocal. During the course of the debate in the last few days, however, we have heard comments from other hon. members of that party and one's conclusions become less firm because some members, like the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken), seem to be of the opinion that the Hall Commission did not recommend a health plan with universal coverage. The hon. member stated quite emphatically that his interpretation of the findings and the recommendations of the Hall Commission was that it would provide for other than universal coverage.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a point of clarification? I said that the Hall Commission provided for the provision of medical care services by agreement with the provinces and that this is not a fundamental of this bill.

Mr. Schreyer: Mr. Speaker, I have before me the speech made by the hon. member on October 18. At page 8796 of *Hansard* the hon. member is reported as saying:

I have seen nothing in the report to the effect that it must be a plan compulsory for every person in Canada.

[Mr. Schreyer.]

To say the least, this is difficult to reconcile with the following. I should like to quote from the official news release handed out by the Hall Commission just after the release of the report itself. This was put on the record by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow). I am quoting from page 8695 of *Hansard*:

The commissioners, after examining various alternatives for providing Canadians with health services, recommend that the health services program be made universally available. They recognize that many Canadians have availed themselves of the benefits of health prepayment plans but these are principally those who can afford protection or are employed where health insurance is provided or subsidized as a part of working conditions. They also recognize the initiative shown by Alberta and Ontario in developing legislation that provides for voluntary coverage of certain medical services, with subsidies for some citizens.

After prolonged study and investigation the commissioners conclude that coverage of all, or virtually all, Canadians could not be achieved through the voluntary system and that only a universal program could achieve maximum coverage.

It is quite clear that the Hall Commission recommended a program with universal applicability of coverage. This is something quite different from what the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka intimated was the case the other day.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has quoted part of my remarks. I wonder whether he would be good enough to complete them. I should like to point out that as found at the bottom of page 8796 of *Hansard* I said:

The commission made recommendations which are general in nature, not specific, to be implemented by agreement.

Mr. Schreyer: I do not think the hon. member should try to confuse two principles in the commission's report. One of these principles has to do with universal coverage and the other with whether or not the plan should be implemented by way of agreement with the provinces or in the same way it was done by the former federal government in the case of hospital insurance.

Mr. Aiken: It is not being done either way in this case.

Mr. Schreyer: My understanding of the way the government is proceeding with regard to this legislation is that it will really not be different from the way in which the benefits of hospitalization were given to the people of this country in 1958. I have no hesitation in saying that in my opinion this