

*Medicare*

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) knows what the present financial situation is in this country. I wonder why it is we have never received in the house any reason for the postponement of the effective date of this bill from July 1, 1967 to July 1, 1968? The minister has said nothing about it. No member supporting the government has said anything about it. We get the news by way of the press of this country that the effective date has been postponed for one year.

I am strongly of the opinion that since the government have decided it shall be postponed until July 1, 1968, they should have waited for the introduction of this bill to parliament until at least early in the calendar year of 1968. Then the government could determine what the financial condition of this country was. They would be able to see their way clear to tax, and would know where the taxation should be imposed. Instead of that, at this early date, 20 months before this bill is intended to come into effect, they introduce it and say it shall pass. Then they find a great deal of fault because the people in various parts of this chamber rise and express their views. I am unable to understand why there is the rush.

There are many things that should be brought before this house that have great urgency, and are for the immediate need and use of the people of this country. They are not being postponed until 1967, 1968 or any other date. They are there for the benefit of the people of the country. However, we are asked to sidetrack those measures, to forget about them for the time being, so we can pass something that will not come into effect until July 1, 1968. There is absolutely no excuse for this situation, and the minister will have a difficult time explaining that point to the satisfaction of the members of this house.

I say that this is not the only reason action should be delayed. We are quite convinced the provinces have not agreed on the type of bill that will carry with it a degree of unanimity amongst the provinces. I say to the minister that I feel it is vital to the success of this whole undertaking that there should be at least a degree of unanimity on the legislation from one end of this country to the other. We have nothing to convince us the matter has even been discussed to any great extent. There is presently a conference taking place in this city. Do we know that this matter is being discussed with a view to obtaining unanimity? I suggest that we do not. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask the

minister, is there not a great deal of merit in trying to secure agreement between the provinces with respect to unanimity? Has any discussion taken place between the provinces with regard to this particular feature?

Then, there is the whole question of portability. Everyone who has mentioned this particular point has been, I believe, favourable to the general idea of portability. I have no reason to think the minister is not favourable, I believe he is. Certainly, I am. But when the citizens of this country move from one province to another they surely would wish to carry with them any privileges that they enjoyed relevant to insured medical care. It seems to me that is just ordinary, plain common sense. Would it not be somewhat confusing to have a variation in the details as between provinces? People would get accustomed to dealing with the whole question of medical care in one province, then move to another and find themselves faced with an altogether different set of rules and regulations. I wonder if the minister has considered that particular feature? I wonder if some attention has been given to that particular point?

Now, I am returning to the matter of the payment of contributions. I do not believe there is much difference of opinion among members of this house as to the general desirability of having medical care made available to any citizens who, through no fault of their own, are in such physical condition that medical care is imperative. I think that is a point on which we can all agree. But, I believe we should examine the details of how we go about securing medical care. How do we define medical care? What is it? What do we do? I happen to be one—and I say this with a great degree of thankfulness—of those people who enjoy good health. I see all around me from day to day people who do not enjoy that privilege. There is nothing much more serious, except life itself, than the enjoyment of good health.

How do we go about getting medical care? What do we do? I am sure that the obvious answer to that question is that we try to have a supply of available doctors. What does this bill do? Does it provide for doctors? The answer is no. Will the minister argue that the payment of contributions will immediately make more doctors available to people requiring medical care in this country? The answer must be no. This may be true in time, perhaps, but not now.