

As I stated a moment ago with great difficulty in a language not very familiar to me, sanatory units have proved themselves, to my mind, the only effective means of preventing the establishment of state medicine in Canada, in the event of the Minister of Pensions and National Health (Mr. Power) favouring such a measure. There are doubtless doctors who would prefer state medicine, but it has a defect which slips too easily into the life of the doctor and which both the public and the doctor should combat by all possible means, that is the spirit of routine. To my mind, and I speak from an experience of seventeen years, state medicine is the surest means of developing this spirit in the practice of medicine. For this reason, for the public good and in order to maintain the medical art at the high level to which it should be maintained in this country, we should take every means to repel this danger and to prevent the introduction and development of this routinism which, I repeat, so easily creeps into the practice of the medical profession.

A doctor's life is not a bed of roses. It is not pleasant to leave a warm house at two o'clock in the morning in twenty-below-zero weather, in order to bring relief to a patient. It does not always appeal to everybody and to every doctor. But there must be somebody to do it, and it must not be forgotten that our country has developed and is still developing as a result of the devotion to duty shown by all classes of its population. Therefore the doctor is ever ready to do his duty. In remote districts where he cannot reach his patients easily and quickly and where the population is not large enough to support a doctor, the state should help the doctor to live and to provide the sick with the medical care essential to every human being.

Hon. C. G. POWER (Minister of Pensions and National Health): The resolution which we have been debating all afternoon reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this house, it is most urgent that state medicine be established in the Dominion of Canada.

To a layman confronted with a resolution of that kind, the first difficulty is to get a real definition of the terms employed. I have listened carefully during the afternoon in order to understand exactly the definition of state medicine, at least in the minds of many of those discussing it. I took the trouble to read in the pages of Hansard debates that have taken place on this subject during recent years, in order to see if they contained a definition of state medicine. I found that on many occasions several hon. members had stated the purpose of state medicine. My

predecessor the Hon. Doctor Sutherland on one occasion said:

The ultimate purpose of any plan is to make available for every Canadian the full benefits of curative and preventive medicine, irrespective of individual ability to pay, and, at the same time, to assure the practitioners of medicine and others associated in the provision of medical care a reasonable remuneration for their services.

My good friend the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Howden), with the idealism which characterizes him, has on former occasions when bringing a similar resolution to the attention of the house, depicted state medicine as a modern utopia. Doctor Stanley, who was member for Calgary East in the parliament which sat here from 1930 to 1935, and who took a great interest in all these matters, stated that he was unable to define just what state medicine was. Under those circumstances I thought it advisable, as a layman, to seek counsel from those who might be best qualified to know, so I asked some of the officers of my department to telegraph to the secretary of the Canadian Medical Association to ask him what definition he would give of state medicine. This definition has already been quoted by the hon. member for St. Boniface this afternoon. It is as follows:

Canadian Medical Association has not adopted any official definition of the term state medicine, but it is my view that council would likely be in agreement upon the following definition. By state medicine is meant a system of medical administration by which the state provides medical services for the entire population or a large group thereof and under which all practitioners are employed, directed and paid by the state on a salary basis.

That is to say, state medicine would be a system whereby medical service would be available to all citizens, and all the medical workers—if I may so express myself—doctors, nurses, dentists, orderlies, etc., would be paid and directed by the state.

On the other hand we have been talking this afternoon of a system described as health insurance, which is cognate to state medicine. But health insurance differs from state medicine, as I understand it, in that it implies a contribution of some kind by the beneficiary and does not necessarily mean that the doctor or medical worker will be in the employ of the state. So the definition I am told should be this, that state medicine means free treatment of all citizens, with payment of the doctors by the state, whereas health insurance means treatment of those who have contributed, by doctors paid, either by fees or on a capitation basis, to look after people who intend to be beneficiaries under the scheme.