

*Medicare*

We heard a great deal about the implementation of this plan on July 1, 1967. We also heard a great deal about this plan a year ago. There was an election one year ago, which perhaps prompted the date of July 1, 1967. Now that the election is over we are back to the old game of stalling it off for another year. I would urge the government not to stall this plan, but to put it through as soon as possible, so that all people in need of medical assistance in Canada can take advantage of it.

• (8:20 p.m.)

The government should tell the people of Canada what they really want to know, and in no uncertain terms—when and how the plan will be introduced. Are we to find the doctors, and the medical profession generally, rejecting this plan because they have not been told, in detail, how it is going to work. I want to make it plain and clear that the citizens of Canada do not wish to be faced with a complete withdrawal of services such as occurred in Saskatchewan. I used the words “complete withdrawal”. The doctors may take exception to that, inasmuch as there was agreement to take care of emergency cases. However the people of Canada do not want such a situation. They do not want to see a withdrawal of services by doctors and professional men because the plan is not acceptable to them.

What the plan actually does is this: It guarantees to the people of Canada that their doctor bills will be paid. This is what prepaid medical care actually is. We must assure the people of Canada that not only will their bills be paid but that there will be a supply of doctors adequate to take care of their needs.

This is one reason why I say: Let us get on with the plan. The federal government must act in complete co-operation in every province. There must be full agreement on the type of program to be introduced so that it is universal in application from one province to another.

In conclusion, let me re-emphasize that this must be a program acceptable to the doctors and to the medical profession in Canada, as well as to the recipients of a program of this type which is long overdue for the poor people and for the aged who are in greatest need.

**Mr. J. E. Pascoe (Moose Jaw-Lake Centre):** I wish to make a few remarks on Bill C-227. In doing so I would make it clear that I agree with the stand taken by this party that all Canadians are entitled to adequate medical

care, but that attention should first of all be paid to those who cannot afford it. I am sure all members are in agreement with this statement.

The Progressive Conservative party, when it was in power, appointed the Hall Commission. We asked for a medical service plan which would be workable when introduced. I emphasize that phrase—“workable when introduced”. We meant that the first stage of the plan would have to be carried out in full co-operation with the provinces and that it should not place too heavy a burden on federal or provincial finances. This is what we are advocating now.

I know I may not refer to an earlier debate in this house, but I believe it is in order to say that not long ago we proposed for the consideration of members that medicare should be introduced gradually. By postponing the implementation of this bill, if passed in its present form, the government has indicated that it cannot or does not wish to pay for the scheme as now drafted. The government is in the same position in this regard as the man who bought a new piano. His neighbour asked him what was the hardest thing about his new possession, and he replied “The hardest thing about it is paying for it.” This is the position in which the government now finds itself.

The postponement of medicare until at least July 1, 1968, after so many definite promises by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) has, in my opinion, very little to do with combating inflation, although that is the excuse given for the delay. Why not speak frankly to the public and say openly that the financial burden and other pressing problems make it impossible to meet the government's promised deadline of July 1, 1967?

I wish to make my own position clear. As I stated earlier, all Canadians are entitled to adequate medical care. But why must this bill be pushed through parliament with such haste, particularly when the government gives such an obvious indication that it is not in a position to pay for it?

A federal-provincial fiscal conference is now being held in Ottawa. Full co-operation with all the provinces is essential if there is to be a satisfactory medicare plan. So why not wait at least until the views of the provincial leaders as expressed in this conference are on record? Perhaps a much more acceptable and workable plan would emerge