

*Medicare*

believe that the people this summer thought, as we thought, that at last there was to be an honest fulfillment of election promises. We saw in the Minister of National Health and Welfare a man of new ideas who recognized that medicare was a necessity now and should be proceeded with. He had the four solid points of the medicare legislation in mind and he was backed solidly by the Prime Minister. Neither one of them could be shaken either on the date or on the principles underlying this bill. The date was always to be July 1, 1967, Canada's 100th birthday, and the principles were always to be foursquare.

We saw the Minister of National Health and Welfare giving the most precious and the most needed thing to our country at the present time—leadership. But this fall we saw that minister crumple up under the pressure of the Minister of Finance who had emerged as a power with the backing of the big, vested financial, insurance and professional interests in this country which do not want medicare now nor for a long time to come. They do not want genuine medicare. They will never want it. We saw the Minister of Finance simply pulling the rug from under the Minister of National Health and Welfare by saying that medicare could not be brought in this year. There he stands today—I am referring to the Minister of Finance—a russet lion rampant barring the road to medicare. The Liberals behind him are torn between two leaderships.

During the recent convention they did not try to disguise the fact that they are a party not without leaders but with so many leaders that they are riding off in all directions at the same time, getting precisely nowhere. That is a fact that cannot be disguised. As a matter of fact, we have the Minister of National Health and Welfare on the one side, the Minister of Finance on the other, and between them the mass of jellyfish Liberals who wish they had the strength to stand by their principles but who are afraid of the Minister of Finance who is backed by the pressure groups of this country which do not want medicare.

This is the situation as we in this party see it. We have no intention of doing what we are asked to do. We are being asked to rush legislation onto the statute books now when it is not intended to be brought into effect for at least a year and a half. The legislation may never go into effect without being watered down so much that it will not be

genuine medicare, and would not be recognized as such by Mr. Justice Hall who has been quoted so often in this house. We will debate this legislation which the people want. Having given the impression that this is the legislation under which it will operate, the government is proceeding to mutilate it and will put on the books something that is completely different, something with the principle of universality undermined. Much worse than that, the government will be opening the door to all the profit-making insurance companies to enter in and destroy the very basis of complete health coverage for everyone, making this measure into some sort of profit-making vehicle, as they have done with other things.

It is perfectly naïve to say that these profit-making insurance companies have certain departments which do not operate at a profit, which are loss leaders and gimmick affairs, and that under this heading the insurance companies will be allowed to come in as provincial carriers. The operations of the insurance companies cannot be separated. They are still profit-making institutions and will destroy the basis of any genuine medicare if they are permitted under the legislation to come in as carriers.

In other words, we are being asked to help to murder medicare and then to build a mausoleum to its memory. We will not do any such thing. We support genuine medicare legislation, and we will certainly have nothing to do with the mutilated version which will be trotted forth by this government and put on the statute books.

The people voted for medicare, they intend to get medicare, and the members of all parties in the house know this. Members of all parties, except those of the party to which I belong, have been wriggling, squirming and twisting the meanings of words to prove that medicare will make a pretty corpse, a dead duck, as a member of the party to my right described it last evening. They have mutilated it in this house while posing as its friend. I think it is worse to have it done to death by enemies who pretend under a cloak that they are friends than by outright enemies, because at least you know what you are dealing with when are dealing with outright enemies.

• (2:10 p.m.)

Each speaker opposing medicare has prefaced his attack by professing his undying devotion to the principles of medicare and to the contention that everyone in this country has the right to full coverage. Then each one