

*Medicare*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Standing order No. 3 states:

3. (1) The presence of at least twenty members of the house, including Mr. Speaker, shall be necessary to constitute a meeting of the house for the exercise of its powers.

I declare the house to be properly constituted. The hon. member for Ontario.

**Mr. Starr:** Mr. Speaker, it is terrible that the government, which is bringing in this important bill, this bill that must be passed without too much debate, that must be put on the statute books now to bring it into effect on July 1, 1968, does not show enough interest to maintain more than a bare quorum of its members in this house.

I say to the government that it should bring in medicare if that is what it wants to call it. In fact the bill is not a bill on medicare. It is a bill to provide payments to provinces which want to institute medicare. The bill will not be universal unless every province has a scheme of its own. I say to the government, do what you said you would do. Put this measure into effect by July 1, 1967 and parliament will back it. But we will not back this government on another dodging, squirming, unprincipled retreat, because we want medicare now. All Canadians want medicare now. They are entitled to have it and this government must keep its promise.

**Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview):** Mr. Speaker, I would be derelict in my duty to the constituents of the riding of Broadview, if I did not express their bitter disappointment and my own at the intended postponement of medicare by the government from July 1, 1967 to July 1, 1968. For the Liberal party to campaign during the election that they and they alone would implement medicare forthwith and then to procrastinate, delay and postpone after the election has made many Canadians disgusted with their performance and has completely erased faith in the promises of the Liberal party.

The Canadian people are now fully aware of the dragging delays of the Liberal party, begun in August, 1919 by Mackenzie King and still continuing today, 47 years later, with promises still unfulfilled with regard to complete medical insurance. This indicates the patience of the Canadian people and the apathy and callous disregard of the Liberal party of their promises to the electorate.

[Mr. Pennell.]

In debating the resolution on medicare the Minister of National Health and Welfare stated as found on page 7549 of *Hansard*:

Members of the committee may be interested in knowing that some 6 million Canadians still lack any medical insurance coverage, and 3 million more have only limited coverage. Probably not more than 10 million Canadians at the present time have what could be called adequate comprehensive coverage. Those without adequate coverage include primarily residents of rural areas and people with moderate or low incomes, unable to acquire low-cost group insurance. I might mention that these figures do not include those who will benefit from the health provisions set out in the Canada Assistance Plan.

The minister is saying that 6 million people do not have coverage and that another 3 million probably have restricted or inadequate coverage. He indicated the response of the provinces to the intended medicare scheme. I quote again from page 7549 of *Hansard*:

The response from the provinces has, I must say, been most encouraging. Some provinces have already indicated their readiness to proceed by our target date of July 1, 1967. Others have not been in a position to commit themselves, although some of these pointed out that they would be able to change existing plans to meet the principles described above. I should like to state that no province has stated that it will definitely not participate although, as hon. members are undoubtedly aware, the premier of Alberta has expressed criticism of the proposal.

These statements indicate the need for medicare, and the response was set forth by the minister during that debate when the leader of my party, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), asked the minister when the government intended to proceed with the legislation. The minister replied:

—I am not in a position to indicate what the situation will be or at what stage we will terminate, but I should like to have second reading of this bill today if possible or before the summer adjournment. That is not a commitment on the part of the government; it is what I should like to see.

One can appreciate the thinking and the feeling of the Minister of National Health and Welfare with regard to the need for medical care insurance and the responsibilities of the different provinces. Also, when asked by the hon. member for Parkdale (Mr. Haidasz) whether the bill would be referred to the committee on health and welfare he repeatedly stated that he felt it was not necessary to refer the bill because the bill merely embodied the principles regarding the requisites for the provinces to be entitled to payment.