

Medicare

things that should receive top priority in its priority ratings of legislation to be presented to the house.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Let me say, in answer to the charge that the opposition has filibustered on occasion to hold up the work of this House of Commons and parliament, that the opposition has no way of bringing legislation forward, but can only debate after passing judgment on whatever legislation is before the house. We are now being asked to pass judgment on legislation which will not come into effect for two years. This is legislation which the government has indicated is needed. The only conclusion I can come to is that the government has decided it is wise to wait until July 1, 1968 before bringing this social program into effect, because it intends to call an election in the fall of 1968. The government must be doing this with the hope that it can once again buy the votes of Canadians by the introduction of social legislation. It is difficult for any member of parliament to stand up and oppose a medicare program. I am trying to rationalize the thinking of the government. If it was really felt that some action of this kind should be taken, the government should bring in immediately legislation which would provide free medical services for all our senior citizens now on pensions.

A program of free medical service for our senior citizens would not be of a magnitude sufficient to create additional inflationary pressures. Some provinces already have programs of this kind, Alberta being one, and I am sure other provinces could afford and would like to move into this field.

I can only conclude by the government's action at this time that it has decided to delay the implementation of this program until 1968, because it will not call an election in 1967 and intends to call one in the fall of 1968 in the hopes that it will be returned to office. Surely that is a mean trick to play on our senior citizens who are looking eagerly to Ottawa for assistance both in relation to pensions and medical care services. This government should reconsider its position and do something for those people who need assistance in meeting the expenses involved in medical and dental care. We here in Ottawa have a responsibility to help the people of Canada in this changing society of ours.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the members of this group intend to support and vote for this bill because we [Mr. Horner (Acadia).]

have over the years felt that medical care should be provided the people of this country without regard for their ability to pay. We believe that such care can only be provided through a plan organized and operated by the government of Canada.

In this party we do not just talk about things. We are not like the Liberals who have been promising to implement this kind of legislation since 1919. The government headed by the present leader of the New Democratic Party when he was premier of the province of Saskatchewan implemented a medicare plan in that province which should be a guide line in Canada.

The bill before us embodies the principles enunciated and explained so clearly by the Royal Commission on Health Services headed by Mr. Justice Hall. Let me point out to those hon. members of the Conservative party who have spoken during the last two days, calling for the killing of this bill, that the Hall Commission was appointed by a former prime minister, the present Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker).

When Mr. Justice Hall brought down his report in 1964 the basic principles enunciated were greeted with enthusiasm by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I have in my hands an article which appeared in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* of June 22, 1964. For the benefit of the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard), who introduced the killer amendment now before us, I should like to read from this article which is headed "Diefenbaker Endorses Health Plan Proposals". The article states:

Opposition leader John Diefenbaker came out strongly in favour of the recommendations of the royal commission on health services Saturday and urged an immediate federal-provincial conference to discuss them.

For the benefit of the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Horner), who just suggested there were many other important matters which ought to be discussed, let me quote another paragraph from that same article which appeared on June 22, 1964. It reads as follows:

Mr. Diefenbaker termed the commission's report the most momentous and outstanding one in Canada in the past 50 years.

In spite of that fact, a host of Conservatives spoke yesterday and today, and I supposed many will speak in days to come, arguing that we do not need this kind of plan because we do not have the facilities to operate it, and because voluntary plans can