

Medicare

ought not to have done. I think this would be very appropriate right at this particular time. We are asked to take the time of the house to discuss this bill which, as I said, will not be in force for two years. Ask the old age pensioners what they think about the house taking up time on this particular bill at this point.

Last summer before the house adjourned, I believe about July 14, the minister made a promise that he would introduce a measure to increase the old age pension to a minimum of \$105 a month. The \$30 extra to bring it up to \$105 is urgently needed. This becomes apparent when we see how these old age pensioners exist, the type of accommodation they have, the type of rooms in which they are living often in the basements of houses which are damp and poorly lighted, and at the same time trying to spread out the \$75 to make it go as far as possible. While they are living in this manner we in this house are debating a piece of legislation which will not come into force for two years. So we come back to that great Liberal slogan of "60 days of decision". I think it is more like six months of indecision, six months of inaction, or maybe it is six months of reversals.

The latest reversal we have heard of today is that the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) is being asked by his fellow cabinet ministers to reverse his decision on unification. Perhaps the Minister of National Health and Welfare should be asked to reverse his decision to go ahead with medicare at this particular time when there are so many other matters which should be debated in the house. There are supplementary estimates with which we should be dealing. The first thing we know we will have reached our 100th anniversary and will not have chosen our national anthem.

We have before us a bill dealing with the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I do not need to remind hon. members that we need a change in the C.M.H.C. regulations so that we can get on building more houses. The Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Marchand) has talked about bringing people to Canada but if we do not have housing for them, why bring them here. People will be living in tents soon if we do not do something about this. We also have the export credit legislation. There is the matter of a budget and the problem of inflation. We should be dealing with all these things but instead we are spending our time on a piece of legislation which will not come into effect until 1968.

[Mr. Hales.]

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit an interruption for a moment? We have had a request that the house suspend its sitting for an hour for the purpose of a dinner break. If this is agreeable to the members of the house opposite, we have no objection on this side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is it agreed that the house suspend its sitting for one hour?

Some hon. Members: Two hours.

Mr. McIlraith: The request is only for one hour. There would be no willingness to agree to two hours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that the house suspend its sitting for one hour?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

SITTING SUSPENDED

At 6.02 p.m. the sitting of the house was suspended.

SITTING RESUMED

The house resumed at 7 p.m.

Mr. Hales: Mr. Speaker, before the supper adjournment I only had time to introduce the four points upon which I propose to speak: first, why we are taking the time of the house now to discuss this piece of legislation that will not be in force for at least two years, if passed; second, my feeling that the federal government should keep out of the medicare business because it really is not its responsibility, up to a point; third, that the country is not prepared for medicare at this particular time; and fourth, my belief that this plan is discriminatory in its compulsory aspect.

I had dealt with my first point and now wish to proceed under the second heading, namely that I feel the federal government should keep out of the business of medicare except to the point where the federal government would pay its share of the subsidized costs experienced by the various provinces which institute a program of medicare. When we stop to look at the situation we find that the province of British Columbia has a good plan of medicare, as have Alberta and Saskatchewan. Manitoba is just waiting for the "go" sign for its plan. Ontario has a good medicare plan, and Quebec is working on a plan. Quebec is looking after the people who cannot afford a medicare plan, and the other provinces in the east are all considering a medicare plan.