

The Address—Mr. Howard

which I consider to be rather feeble legislation in this field to ensure that it could come into effect more quickly than was envisaged under the Liberal plan. This is the record in Canada.

In a few years' time we will be celebrating our centennial; we will be one hundred years old as a nation, and we still have not any degree of protection, medicalwise, for the people of this nation. I believe it was Germany in the 1800's which first instituted a national health plan for the people of that country. Austria and Hungary had health and medical coverage plans in effect before the turn of the century. Other commonwealth countries, New Zealand, Great Britain and Australia have plans in effect. In short, according to the latest figures I have been able to secure, some 39 or 40 nations in the world have general, all-inclusive, comprehensive medical programs in effect for the people of those nations.

The two countries in the world which pride themselves on having the highest standards of living, the highest income per capita and the best care, notably the United States and Canada, still do not have that degree of care for our people that would push us into putting into effect a program such as we envisage.

As I mentioned, the government in office made a commitment to the people of this nation when it was elected. They made a bargain with them, which was promptly broken, that there would be federal financial participation and coverage for patients in tubercular sanatoria and mental hospitals. This has not taken place yet. It is one of those bad cheques which the Prime Minister wrote.

Let me tell the house what this means with respect to the type of coverage which does exist. The total number—and these figures are taken from hospital statistics developed by the dominion bureau of statistics for the year 1959—indicate that 41 per cent of the hospital bed capacity in this nation is taken up by tubercular sanatoria and mental hospitals, none of which is covered. This means that in so far as the bed capacity is concerned, only 60 per cent of the people of this nation are being covered by the act at present on the statute books of Canada, and 40 per cent are not covered.

With regard to mental hospitals, which depend upon the financial resources of provincial governments, we find overcrowding; and with regard to the bed capacity in mental hospitals—and this is all across the country—they used this capacity to the tune of 110.4 per cent in the year 1959.

This not only indicates that we have an inordinately large number of people in mental

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hospitals about whom we should be concerned, but it also indicates that these hospitals are seriously overcrowded. It also indicates that if this government had any real, definite, sincere and honest concern for proper medical coverage in this country, they would have instituted even the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act and amended it in such a way that federal financial help would have been given to the provinces in order that they could carry out a properly planned, over-all scheme of hospitalization and care for mental patients.

All the Prime Minister has done in this regard, after waiting and waiting week after week and month after month, is establish one of his national study groups to deal with this question, a royal commission. We know that so far as a health plan is concerned—I am sure this parliament knows, and I am sure the people of this country know it also—the royal commission established by the Prime Minister was a waste of time, a waste of money and a waste of effort and is nothing more than a subterfuge to cover up the inadequacy, inability and insincerity of this government to deal with this particular question.

Mr. Pallett: The ignorance of the hon. member is pre-eminent.

Mr. Howard: At least my hon. friend from Peel knows how to pronounce the word "ignorance". Perhaps he has been consulting the Solicitor General (Mr. Browne).

Mr. Nowlan: The hon. member feels so low today that we must forgive him for using these exaggerated terms.

Mr. Howard: If I may reply to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Nowlan) I would say that I never feel low except when it comes to income tax paying time, and then I become a bit disconcerted. But we have a royal commission, and that is the way we are going to deal with the health of this nation. What can possibly be the result of this royal commission? It does not really matter in so far as a health program is concerned because at the moment the only possible thing the federal parliament can do constitutionally is say, "We will enter into this field and assist the provinces financially. Their hands are tied. They cannot institute any federal plan in this parliament without amending the British North America Act. The Prime Minister knows this. Under our constitution the only people who can institute all-inclusive medical care plans are provincial governments. We have one government in one province of this country which has embarked upon that particular field."