

Medicare

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, when this medicare legislation was introduced last summer we in this party welcomed it very enthusiastically as something long overdue and very much to our liking. We felt it was sure to be welcomed very much by everyone across Canada. It is a curious thing that today we are now playing the role of trying to save this legislation. The government is playing the role that for purposes of propaganda only it is going to submit the legislation to the house and then turn around and by making amendments kill it, ably assisted by members of other groups in the house.

I want to make abundantly clear that we in this party recognize what is going on for exactly what it is—a betrayal of medicare. I also want to say that people across the country in their thousands are going to recognize this for what it is—a betrayal of medicare. The bill as it will be sought to be amended by the government will not provide genuine medicare of the type we were going to support and for which we were going to vote. It will have been mutilated in three or four respects, thus depriving the people of Canada of what they need. The biggest mutilation of the bill is that it is not going to come into effect until at least a year later than it was supposed to become effective, namely, not until July 1, 1968.

• (2:00 p.m.)

I was very much interested to discover that apparently the government has taken the precaution of obtaining the signature of the finance minister to the provision that the bill should come into effect not later than 1968. I remember it was also necessary to obtain the signature of a prime minister of this country much earlier in time so as to make it possible to get on the books the first social security legislation providing old age pensions. For some years the Liberal party had been promising old age pensions but nothing had happened. It was only when a couple of members representing labour obtained the signature of Prime Minister Mackenzie King that finally there was leverage enough to obtain passage of the old age pensions legislation. It is interesting to note that this time it is the Liberal party itself which has taken the precaution of obtaining the signature of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp), who is quite evidently the strong man of the cabinet today, to try to ensure that medicare will not be delayed even beyond July 1, 1968. It may be

[Mr. Hymmen.]

that this will not be sufficient to prevent yet another sell-out.

This manoeuvre on the part of Liberal governments of promising, promising and promising, getting elected on promises and then discovering suddenly that economic conditions unfortunately will not let them carry out their promises, is nothing new. In my province of British Columbia we have had Liberal governments too, and they have promised at elections that medicare would be brought in. It was called health insurance in those days. During the 1930's the promise was made by the Liberal party, as it ran in successive elections, that we should have health insurance. Each time we were told, as an explanation of the failure to implement it, that "regrettably this cannot be done at this time". The members of the Liberal party in that legislature fell into line just as those of the Liberal party in this parliament are falling into line.

During an election in 1936 they had to go so far as to put health insurance legislation on the statute books of British Columbia. In my hand I hold an act, not a bill, to bring about health insurance in British Columbia. This measure was passed, signed and assented to by the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia in 1936. But it has never been proclaimed by a Liberal government since that time. So, Mr. Speaker, some of us are understandably dubious whether even the signature of the Minister of Finance on the dotted line will ensure enough leverage to get this measure through by 1968. The date of the act in my hand is April 1, 1936 April fool's day. That was a cruel April fool's joke if ever there was one. I think that what is being perpetrated at this time is a Halloween hoax which may go on for a few years yet. I say that because each time in the past, despite honest intentions here, there and everywhere, it has been discovered by the government that conditions would not permit the passage of a genuine medicare bill.

Was the situation different this summer for the people across this country who voted for the Liberal party in the last election? Again, I have one of the party's big advertisements before the last election. Here is the Liberal party's plan for medicare, setting out the four solid points. People voted in the innocence of their hearts believing that the Liberal government, when it said it would do something, would in fact do something. That is the Liberal party for you. The people voted for medicare as set forth in this advertisement. I