

Medicare

responsibility. Let it go to the electorate—although I do not mean that we should have another election—and find out what the people think of a government which allows a continual escalation in the cost of living and then suggests that it will bring in grandiose plans such as the Canada Pension Plan.

Education, I repeat, should receive priority and should come first. We must educate more doctors, nurses and technicians, but above all everyone must be educated to a higher level than an average of 8.2 years of schooling so that their productivity, at least in 75 per cent of the cases, will be such that they will rise above what we classify as the level of need. At the same time this 75 per cent of the population will be able to carry the burden for the other 25 per cent. Only through increasing productivity can we derive taxes to pay for these types of plans. The Utopia, of course, would be to have only 2 per cent in need, but that is more a dream than a reality.

• (4:00 p.m.)

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said that he spoke for all Canadians. I am not saying that this constitutes real evidence that a medicare plan was forced on the people of Saskatchewan, but I would remind the leader of the New Democratic Party—in fact, I think he would make this admission—that had he remained leader of his party in Saskatchewan and not brought in compulsory medicare the N.D.P. would still be in office in that province today. I see the hon. member smiling. I have to compliment him because, though I have been a Conservative all my life, I felt that the hon. member provided a better administration on the whole than did the Gardiner machine.

I wish to refer to page 13 of a book by Mr. Robert Tyre, and I put this on record because it has reference to the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam, formerly premier of Saskatchewan. It is interesting to note what is said about universal, compulsory plans. I quote:

Citizens who had not forgotten those fine promises of 1944 would find something tragically ironic in a news story that appeared in the *Regina Leader Post* of January 6, 1962. The story reported that a 76-year-old Regina man had collapsed and died in city police court while facing trial. The man had been charged with failing to pay his hospitalization tax in 1956. And it was the government of Saskatchewan that brought him to trial—a government that won election on a promise to provide the people of Saskatchewan with free health services.

[Mr. Woolliams.]

That little story, though it may be on the fringe of what may happen under a compulsory plan, may show us one thing. It may show us what a universal compulsory plan may mean to the lives of all Canadians and to people who accept some individual responsibility. When the unions have their own plans, when the office workers have their own plans and when the farmers have their own plan, what we should be doing is helping those people who have no plan at all.

Mr. D. R. Tolmie (Welland): Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed with the manner in which the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) introduced one of the most historic and far reaching pieces of legislation ever to be presented to parliament. The minister would have been forgiven if he had, with oratorical fire and fervour, dramatically ushered in this bill which has finally arrived after years of turmoil, delay and debate. Instead, in a very succinct, non-partisan way he has launched this tremendous bill which will affect the future welfare of millions of Canadians and many generations yet unborn. I hope that further debate will be of the same calibre and that hon. members, devoid of partisan politics, will express their views forcibly but with reason and restraint.

Personally I have always supported the concept of a national medical scheme, because I feel it is simply a recognition that all of us have a collective responsibility for the hurts of others. It is as simple as that. I know many people argue that most people are already covered by medical insurance, that this measure is another unwarranted intrusion by government into private lives, that it is another example of creeping socialism which is undermining the individual's desire and ability to fend for himself and look after his own needs. I can fully appreciate the honesty and good faith with which this argument is advanced, but I feel most strongly that in a nation with our vast riches and resources every man, woman, and child as of right, regardless of income, is entitled to the best possible medical attention that science and research can provide.

On humanitarian grounds alone medicare is justified. I firmly believe that each of us is our brother's keeper and our brother's brother. By furnishing good universal medical care and relieving human agony and suffering, the government is carrying out the noblest Christian precept.