

Medicare

such a scheme unless there will be available the qualified personnel and facilities to properly administer it.

It is the last paragraph in this letter that I wish to emphasize now. I think it is misrepresentation to say to the people of Canada that we can adequately provide a system of comprehensive medical care, with the attributes the government is seeking, on the basis of the present availability, not only of doctors but of all those other people who are essential in assisting doctors. What has been done by the government in this regard so far is, frankly, picayune. It is nothing.

Mr. MacEachen: It is a billion dollars.

Mr. Lambert: It is nothing but promises. It is nothing in relation to the demand or the need. What has this government done to increase the funds available for basic medical research? What has it done in any meaningful way? Ask any doctor. Ask any medical school. Read some of the letters which members of parliament get in this regard. Here again we see how what is held out under this scheme to be the promise is nothing but a snare and delusion.

Right from the beginning people will expect to get all that has been promised. If the government were honest with the public, and said that this would be a limited scheme, that there would be shortages, that there would be difficulties at the outset, then we could perhaps take a different attitude. But no. The benefits of this scheme are vaunted at the 100 per cent level—at least, this is what its proponents in the Liberal party are claiming. I do not think this is right.

The minister may be able in the course of his reply to tell us whether the financial arrangements with regard to this legislation are to be discussed at the forthcoming federal-provincial conference which is to consider the fiscal arrangements between the federal government and the provinces. There is to be the negotiation of new agreements governing all joint programs of this type which are covered by the so-called opting-out legislation. Is medicare to be discussed at that time or is it to be pushed aside with the statement that the legislation is not due to take effect until July 1, 1968, perhaps, so we shall cross that bridge when we come to it?

• (5:10 p.m.)

I suggest to the government that if it were prepared to apply the principle of opting out to medicare so that the provinces could institute their own schemes to cover the

[Mr. Lambert.]

needs of the people within the provinces, with these schemes meeting the minimum requirements that the federal government would set up, then there would be a lot more hope for success in regard to a plan for medical services. Surely to goodness the people of this country, those who see fit to do so, still have the right to assume their responsibilities in regard to health services. Why should they all be dragooned by some form of doctrinaire approach, with someone deciding that this shall be good for all of the populace?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Justice Hall?

Mr. Lambert: Those are views from which I respectfully dissent.

Mr. MacEachen: And your leader, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker), endorsed them.

Mr. Lambert: That is perfectly all right but I happen to come from the province of Alberta. In this connection, if the minister considers that in matters of this kind there cannot be differences in thinking, then he denies the right to any representative in the government party, or otherwise, from the province of Quebec to think other than he does coming from the maritimes. I can assure him there are many areas of thinking in which there is a fundamental difference and therefore he must agree that I, coming from the province of Alberta, have a right to dissent in principle in regard to some of these propositions, and I do.

Mr. MacEachen: I only want to ask one question. How does the hon. member justify his dissent from the policy put forward by his leader in the last election, which was to endorse thoroughly the Hall recommendations?

Mr. Lambert: Yet within the Hall recommendations there is a proposition for a voluntary choice, if the minister will read them carefully, and the declaration of the Conservative party with regard to medical care was quite acceptable. There was still that voluntary choice available. The minister can shake his head. He was too busy down in Nova Scotia promising a \$25 million subvention to the coal industry, which he has no intention of implementing, to notice these differences.

Mr. MacEachen: Well, we will put it on the record at the right time.