

*Unemployment*

not care how it is done—is the implementation of a national health program. I am sure it would receive the support of this party and also the party sitting to my right because they, too, have spoken in favour of it. The hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Croll), who sits in support of the government, I am sure would stand behind a program of this kind, because I understand he supported it in the campaign as a result of which he was elected to this parliament.

If instead of waiting, as it did in 1945 when the green books were brought out, it were to assemble data for a national health program, it could begin now with health grants to the provinces, and the provinces could make their plans for a national health program. We need hospitals in every province of Canada. Under the hospitalization plan in Saskatchewan we have advanced to the stage where perhaps we need very few new hospitals. However, I was reading an article—I do not have it with me—in which the minister of health in the Ontario government indicated that they are short of hospitals, and that they do not have the facilities for the treatment of many of the diseases we treat in Saskatchewan on a free basis. I am thinking of polio, cancer, and some other diseases. That is something tangible upon which a start could be made at the present time. If this government had the will to do so, I am sure there is a way.

We remember back in the war years when the government said that anything physically possible would be made financially possible, and that is the principle we should adopt in this instance. Anything physically possible should be made financially possible. I am saying that a national health plan should have a real beginning this year, particularly when we have so many unemployed. The construction of hospitals would employ large numbers in the building and service trades. It would mean that we would also set up—and in my estimation quite properly—grants so that we would have technicians, doctors, nurses and those other persons who are necessary so that when a national health plan came into operation they would be available to look after it.

Any member who has studied the need for a national health plan, and the problems involved in it, will recognize that first of all a great deal of groundwork must be done before such a plan can become operative. The government should not sit idly by at this time and do nothing about it, particularly when they had it in their program in 1919 and again in 1945. Let them get busy and do something about it. This is the time to make

the beginning. Start now by giving grants to the various provinces. Get in touch with the ministers of health, and do not dicker along for six or eight months or a year trying to find out who is responsible, or who will do something about it. Do it yourselves, and insist that the provinces come in with you. I am sure they will do so quite readily. You will not have to force it upon any of the provinces if you are really sincere about bringing in the initial stages of a national health plan.

There is one thing we should do, Mr. Speaker, when we realize that there are so many breadwinners unemployed, some of them even eating in the soup kitchens. Because of that fact many children will not be getting proper health care; they will not be getting their teeth attended to; they will not have the operations and the other medical care they should get. A national health plan would be of tremendous benefit to this country if the government would be serious about it and immediately undertake such a program.

There is another thing we can do. I wish to refer to public works projects which have been advocated by different members in this house. I hold in my hand a newspaper report of a speech delivered by the Minister of Public Works, in which he said that a public works program was no panacea for an economy. That may well be, Mr. Speaker, but those of us on this side of the house, and particularly in this group, have never believed and I do not think will ever believe that a public works program would not be beneficial at this time. We have felt that a public works program would in fact be very beneficial at this time. We could build roads and spend a large amount of federal money to put our people to work. I do not think we need to have the sort of theory the other parties had in the 1930's. At that time it was the intention at first to put people to work so they could have some wages. I am talking now about useful employment, construction of highways, public buildings, beautification of our parks, things which will be beneficial to the country.

It is well known that the central government of the United States puts money into every single road in every state in the union. That is a principle which should be accepted in this country. The central government of this country receives the greatest percentage of the revenue of this country, and is therefore in a position to help our provinces and municipalities in the construction of both provincial and municipal roads. Therefore it should take into consideration the practicability of helping those various levels of government so they can undertake their own responsibilities.