

State Medicine

A definition seems necessary at this stage. I would say that state medicine means this: a system of socialized medicine making available to all complete medical service at public expense.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a living question. It is a living question to those who see the need for it daily; it is a dying question to those who are afflicted and cannot get necessary medical care. State medicine is not a dominion question only, but is linked up closely with the provinces. Hon. Doctor C. M. Weir, provincial secretary for British Columbia, says it is necessary to have cooperation with the dominion government. We appreciate that, and I am sure the members from British Columbia and the other provinces are ready to say, in the words of Dickens, "Barkis is willin'."

There may be hon. members who think that because I am not a doctor I have no right to speak on this question. But I maintain I have every right to speak because of what I know, and because of the reality of the things I have seen, and because, too, of the number of times that I have seen the doctor do all he can, serve faithfully to the end, and then say to the minister: I have done my best, and I must now hand the patient over to you. I should like to give you an example of that. In the town of Souris two doctors were called in to attend one who was seriously ill. When they left I asked them if there was any hope, and they shook their heads. The finger nails of the patient were purple, his lips were purple, and his eyes were becoming glassy. His temperature was 105½ and his pulse was over 140; he had the death rattle in his throat. I said, "I suppose I can put on all the mustard I like;" they said, "It won't hurt." So I stood in the door of that room; I asked the Great Physician to take charge, and I was willing to cooperate to the limit. We continued to apply mustard every half hour from then on to six o'clock in the evening, which was about eleven hours. Then the patient called out that he was burning up; and we were thankful to see when we took off the mustard that there was much sweat. I was going out to get him a drink of water, when he called to his wife, "Make that sky pilot stand in the door and thank the Great Physician." Therefore, Mr. Speaker, having afterwards given that man seventy-six hypodermics of digitalis, strychnine and camphor oil, I know a little bit about medicine. I believe I have some right to speak on this question because of my association with doctors who have given outstanding services to patients which have been much appreciated. But I would interject here that, being

[Mr. McIvor.]

of course inexperienced in this house, I have been surprised that so many members advocate cures for the diseases of the body politic and leave altogether out of consideration Him who one day took from a lad five loaves and two fishes and with them was able to feed a multitude.

This proposal implies, first, all essential medical service requisite to the recovery and maintenance of complete health; all that is necessary to the complete well-being of the sick, both physical and mental, including examination, diagnosis, services of doctors and nurses; the benefits that can be secured from hospitalization; health education, preventive service, and a check-up of all those who are ailing. Second, it implies the socialization of medicine, government responsibility for seeing that such service is freely available to all, and that existing services should be utilized as far as feasible. It does not imply compulsory use of this service, neither does it imply that private medicine shall be prevented.

I should like to give a few statistics; this matter is not in my field, but I find it necessary to do so.

More than half the deaths at childbirth which could have been avoided are caused by deficiencies in medical care; so says the New York academy of medical care. More than half the sick in certain crowded centres receive no medical care whatever; so says the United States public health service. Only three teeth in ten now receive dental care—the rest just keep on decaying; so says the committee on the cost of medical care. And that same committee adds that only one person out of ten receives a doctor's annual examination, which any doctor would say is the right way to prevent disease, by nipping it in the bud. The committee concludes, after five years of research, that our tragic failure to make full use of our hospitals, nurses, doctors and dentists causes a vast amount of preventable economic waste, physical pain and mental anguish, as well as millions of needless deaths. We need the benefits of prevention. The poet said that a fence at the top of the hill is better than an ambulance down in the valley. The remedy for this condition will not come through the individual doctor, who is often overworked and often underpaid, as will be shown a little later on; it will not come through the charity and the extra service of the medical man, or through committees. Let me quote from Mr. Greaves, who spoke lately over the radio:

For one thing, it seems to me extremely contributive to the issue that the commercial or profit motive should be, if utilized at all, relegated to second or indirect place. . . .