

*Medicare*

view, may be neither necessary nor desirable but which, unless accepted, would deprive them of assistance in financing their medical care insurance programs.

It is true that a province can refrain from participation in this particular program, but in so doing it still would contribute in the form of taxes to the implementation of the plan in other provinces in other parts of Canada. Therefore as I said, although there have been some rather fundamental changes promised in this legislation, these do not go far enough to remove some of the more obvious features which are obnoxious to various provincial governments and which I understand will not be accepted by them.

In looking at the measure before us, I think there are some commendable factors involved. First of all, there is recognition of the fact that health is not just a personal concern or a personal asset, but is a national concern and a national asset as well. There is no question but that illness is a personal loss; it brings hardship to the individual and to his family. It is however a national loss, in that that individual is not able to make the contribution in productive enterprise and in various social activities which go to make up our national life.

I think there is recognition as well of another principle; that is, that Canadian citizens should have within their reach, regardless of any financial considerations or obstacles, the very best in medical care which science has made possible. We stand amazed when we contemplate the advances which have taken place over the past few years in medical science as well as in other sciences. But what is the use of advances in medical science if people are not able to avail themselves of the benefits? Therefore I believe we must ensure that the children of our nation may have the health care necessary to the development of sound and strong bodies. We believe that families must not be fettered for their lifetime by medical bills which pile up and are beyond their ability to discharge. We believe the aged among us must not be deprived of those medical services required in their declining years. I say that regardless of the financial standard. I believe these services must be brought within their reach and must be made available to them whenever they are required.

I believe there is another principle involved here; that is, that society as a whole must assume collective responsibility to provide good medical services to those who, for a

variety of reasons, are unable to provide it for themselves. In other words we recognize the fact that there always will be individuals in our society who, for various reasons, cannot be gainfully employed and are unable to earn sufficient money even to take care of the necessities of life, so far as food is concerned. Certainly when it comes down to the matter of medical attention they will never be able to meet the challenge or the need in this particular area of their lives. Therefore society collectively must recognize this fact and assume some responsibility therein.

• (8:10 p.m.)

Having said that I want to make it abundantly clear that we in the Social Credit party support the principle of a medical care plan. In stating that, however, I am not saying we are in support of or in agreement with every clause, line or word in the present bill. I believe it was the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who said his party would support this measure on the understanding that they would be supporting it as it now is, and not as it may be amended. Of course when we vote on second reading we are voting for the principle of the bill which is, as I have pointed out, the authorization of the payment of contributions by Canada toward the cost of insured medical care services incurred by the provinces, pursuant to medical insurance plans. As I said, while supporting the principle we do not support unreservedly all the various clauses contained therein.

Let me place on record, if I may, part of a statement made by the leader of our party on July 12 in respect of this matter. The hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) stated at that time, as reported in *Hansard* at page 7563:

Mr. Chairman, in commenting on this resolution, which is a preliminary to the medicare legislation that has been talked about by the government now for such a long period of time, I should like to say that we in the Social Credit party are in complete agreement with the proposition advanced by the minister that every Canadian citizen and every Canadian family, regardless of financial status or any other classification that might be applied, must have full access to the highest quality, comprehensive health care possible, according to physical or mental needs. This is a basic principle, and I think we, not only as members of this house but as members of society as a whole, must assure every Canadian citizen and every Canadian family that it will be achieved.

I believe that sets out very clearly the position of our group in respect of the principle of the measure before us tonight.