

*The Address—Mr. Drew*

sions and inquiries which are absolutely necessary before any plan could be agreed upon between the dominion and provincial governments.

It would be most improper for the dominion government to leave the impression that it could proceed with any national health insurance program without the most extensive inquiry to ascertain the basic facts upon which any sound approach to this problem must depend.

The problem of meeting the cost of medical care is now one of the most serious problems confronting individuals, as well as provincial and municipal authorities who must accept responsibility in many cases where the patients are unable to pay the cost of hospitalization and medical treatment.

Since the dominion government submitted its proposals to the provinces in 1945 the situation has changed very greatly. Hospital and other medical costs have risen by leaps and bounds. If it were not for the unselfish service of Canadian doctors in every community many patients simply would not get medical treatment at all at this time. Let it be said to the everlasting credit of the doctors of this country that there are few cases on record where any patient has failed to receive medical attention because of his inability to pay for the services of a doctor. But the present situation is imposing a tremendous burden upon the doctors, upon the provincial authorities and particularly upon the municipal authorities.

There can be no satisfactory solution of this complex problem until there is a thorough examination of the costs of medical care, hospitalization and other aspects of diagnostic, preventive, surgical and medical care. In 1945 the representatives of this government left no doubt that in their opinion extensive inquiries were necessary before this subject could be tackled. If such an inquiry was necessary then, it is far more necessary today, with the increasing complexity of this problem. It has become doubly necessary because of the increasing invasion of the provincial and municipal tax fields by the dominion government. For that reason there should be general agreement that the first and necessary step in dealing with this subject is to institute an inquiry which would be conducted by representatives of the medical profession, the hospital boards, the dominion, provincial and municipal governments. It is not sufficient to get recommendations from those governments that care to forward them. This is a subject in which all the cost must be considered jointly. The sooner such an inquiry is started the sooner it will be possible to discuss this problem

with some knowledge of the essential facts. Without such an inquiry this problem cannot be tackled in a satisfactory manner. There would be no satisfactory basis for agreement between the dominion, provincial and municipal authorities, and agreement in that respect is absolutely necessary.

The dominion government is long in default in proceeding with such an inquiry. I hope there will be no suggestion that this subject could be dealt with without an inquiry of that kind in view of the earlier insistence by this government that such an inquiry was necessary and that it was because of the need of that inquiry that they could not proceed at that time to discuss some aspects of their proposals. Whatever method is to be adopted, one thing is certain. Some method must be found to assure proper diagnostic, surgical and medical treatment in every case which requires it.

On one point let us be very definite. We want no state medicine in Canada. The free relationship of the doctor to the patient must be preserved. In this, as in other matters, we must make a definite decision. Either we believe in freedom or we believe in supreme state authority. There is state medicine in Russia. There is state medicine in every communist country. State medicine has also been adopted by some countries which are far from communist. Most of them, however, have learned by sad experience that it is an unsatisfactory system both for the doctors and for the patients. As we believe in freedom, let us preserve the freedom of our doctors and the freedom of our patients under a system which will meet the cost of medical care in a free society which is really free.

Now I wish to deal with a subject which is directly related to what I have been saying about medical care. Perhaps the most important question for Canadians to decide in the field of domestic affairs is the constitutional relationship between the dominion, provincial and municipal governments and the way in which they are going to be able to carry out their responsibilities under the Canadian constitution. I mention the municipalities for this reason. Although it is true that the municipalities are legally emanations of the provincial legislatures, the fact remains that because of the serious plight in which many municipalities now find themselves, these municipalities are seeking direct assistance of different kinds from the dominion government, as the collector of most of our taxes and the place where so much revenue has been accumulated that it is not available in the ordinary way in the required quantities by the other levels of government.

This parliament and Canadians generally must give immediate consideration to the