

Medicare

meant to the municipalities. Prior to the passage of this legislation there was a continual charge on the municipalities for operating services. Now, under the provisions of the hospital services bill, hospitals are able to pay their own way with some small provision for capital expansion.

During this debate several members have raised the question of additional allowances for hospital beds. This, of course, is a very important matter and was introduced yesterday by the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard). Some references were made yesterday and today to a certain meeting in Ottawa. I should like to identify that meeting. It was the 1966 convention of the national Liberal party whose delegates, 1700 in all, overwhelmingly endorsed the responsible decision of this government.

• (1:50 p.m.)

While the delegates and the members on this side of the house were disappointed at the delay of medicare, which was to have come into effect on July 1, 1967, the centennial year of confederation, it has only been delayed until July 1, 1968, one year later, and will be implemented earlier if possible. As I have said, Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as the official delegates of a political party to a national convention have accepted the responsible decision of this government, I feel that the people of Canada, both those who support the government presently in power as well as those who do not will certainly recognize and accept that a responsible decision has been made.

Many other matters are involved in addition to the \$40 million which it is estimated it will cost the Dominion of Canada to finance medicare. We are in a time of unprecedented prosperity which contrasts strongly with the situation we had just a few years ago. Even though we have so much and are producing so much, sometimes we have to sit back and, irrespective of promises which were made in good faith, decide whether or not in the interests of preserving the growth and development of this country we can afford to implement this legislation at this time, albeit an important piece of legislation.

I referred to the address given yesterday by the hon. member for Simcoe East, who I know conscientiously represents in this place not only his constituents and the people of Canada but also his profession. This is true of other members of the medical profession such as the hon. member for Parkdale (Mr. Haidasz), who has just spoken, the hon. member

for Hamilton South (Mr. Howe) and many others. We need the co-operation of the medical profession which, according to standards of comparison, is a very excellent profession. Within its limited facilities it has provided over the years great service to the people of Canada, has assisted in research development, and has brought forward new ideas and new cures for the sick.

I mentioned that this was a very significant piece of legislation, as is other legislation such as the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Assistance Plan, unemployment insurance, youth allowances and many other acts, all of which have provided much to the very fortunate people of this very wonderful and prosperous land. Perhaps I am a bit too realistic, but among many letters I have received from my constituents is one asking for additional assistance for people receiving old age assistance and who require additional help. The day after I received that letter I received another from a constituent who wanted a great deal more assistance for underdeveloped countries, a plea which was very eloquently expressed by one of the speakers at the convention held this week to which I have referred. Some members of the Canadian community are concerned about others and are very critical of what we do for our own people. Conversely, some people want everything for themselves and have no concern at all for less fortunate people.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to speak at great length on this matter. I was sorry I was not able to hear the introductory remarks of the Minister of National Health and Welfare yesterday because I always enjoy hearing him. Unfortunately I was called out of the house at that time. But I should like to congratulate him on bringing in this legislation and on the very co-operative stand which he has taken under circumstances which were rather difficult.

When this legislation becomes law, Mr. Speaker, it will provide complete medical service for all Canadians. As I said in connection with the previous bill, this bill is not designed for a great many people in my constituency in the province of Ontario but for those who never have had and never would have had an opportunity to obtain even minimal medical assistance in this country, a country where every citizen should receive this assistance as a basic right and be provided with medical services whenever they are needed.