

Medicare

If the Liberal party can ignore so solemn and so clearcut a commitment, how can it be trusted to honour its new pledge to launch medicare by 1968, especially when a large majority of the Liberal cabinet is known to be opposed or indifferent toward a medicare program?

And if inflation can be used to justify a delay in medicare this time, what assurance can Mr. Sharp offer that it won't be used to justify another delay in 1968?

I suggest to the minister of National Health and Welfare that the views expressed in that editorial in the Liberal Toronto *Star* cannot be refuted, because they are 100 per cent true. The decision of the government to postpone the implementation of medicare was a betrayal of the solemn promise which was made by Liberal leaders, from the Prime Minister down, and which is long overdue.

The people of this country will not forget this betrayal. In the next election the people of Canada will demonstrate what they think of this kind of shabby and disgraceful treatment on the part of this government and the Liberal party. I am sure that when another election is held the predictions of recent Gallup polls will prove correct.

I am certain, Mr. Speaker, that our party, which has made it clear over the years that we believe in the implementation of medicare, will gain a great deal in the next election both in terms of votes and seats. But much as I believe in my party, and much as I want my party to grow and to become the major party in this country, I say that the price of such election is too high. I would rather have medicare introduced today and implemented in July 1967 by a Liberal government than that it be implemented later, even though I am sure that another election would mean that our party would gain a great deal.

This is a sad time for the people of Canada, Mr. Speaker. It is particularly sad for the tens of thousands of people who are not receiving the kind of medical service they need, the kind to which they are entitled and which they ought to have had long ago—the kind of service promised by the Liberal party, the kind of service which was endorsed by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) when he supported the basic principles of the Hall Commission report, and the kind of service which we in this party have been urging and advocating for many years.

Medicare will come, Mr. Speaker; but it will come much later that it ought to have come, thanks to the weak-kneed vacillations of this government.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

Mr. F. J. Bigg (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I do not stand in my place today to give members a lecture on what other people should do. Rather I stand to declare from my place why I support this amendment.

Our job in the official opposition is to tailor legislation which comes before this house. If in a man's conscience he supports certain legislation, he is not necessarily bowing to the will of the government or bowing to the will of his own party. It is still possible for a man in this country to make his own independent assessment of what should be done in a given situation. I claim this on behalf of the district I represent, because that is the kind of representation that not only my constituents expect and demand, but it is the kind of representation they get.

In the nine years I have been in this house, Mr. Speaker, I have never been bullied by my party. If I had I would not be in it. I have never even been unduly pressured by my party. If I had I would not be in it. One has only to observe the differences of opinion among the independent members of the Conservative party to see that this is the kind of party we are; and I say that this is the kind of man I am. Let us stop the class war. There is no need for a class war in Canada. But there is need for co-operation in every branch of our society in Canada today. Those who yell the loudest about the degradation of parliament are self-condemning.

I am not cynical and I do not believe that the members of this house are a pack of sheep; far from it. It is very hard indeed to line up our party as being a pack of sheep in relation to any proposal put before the house. One has only to go over *Hansard* for the last few days to see that there are differences of opinion over this question of medicare. I am entitled to my own personal view just as I am entitled to support my party if it reaches a consensus. I also have the right to criticize this government or any other government—including that of my own party when in power—if it acts against my own personal conscience and the will of the people I represent.

My constituents at the provincial level have made it abundantly clear what they think of Alberta's idea of medicare. No one can accuse me of being a supporter of the Social Crediters, but if the Social Crediters happen to have landed upon an answer to a specific problem which affects the welfare of the people of my province at this time, I will try