

Supply—Health and Welfare

Saskatchewan. That is why when they were in office they wiggled from one side of the fence to the other and never did anything about medicare. That is why there were no great forward steps in health and welfare legislation while we had a Tory government.

Mr. Lambert: We got the whole Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act.

An hon. Member: We set up the royal commission.

Mr. Douglas: I am suggesting that the Tory party should now tell this committee and tell the people of Canada whether they agree with the hon. member for Saskatoon that medicare in this country ought not to be on a universal basis, that there ought to be discrimination so that only those who can qualify on a means test basis will be able to get medicare under a government sponsored plan. Do they support the kind of plan that has been set up in Alberta? I think they should tell us. That is what the plan in Alberta amounts to.

It means an arrangement whereby those who are able to pay for private insurance can do so while those who cannot pay the very high premiums demanded may, if they are willing to undergo the indignity, get the government to contribute part or all of the premium provided a means test can be passed.

Mr. Lambert: You have a means test attached to many other programs.

Mr. Douglas: I notice a great many interruptions from the Tory benches but I have not yet heard any person in the Tory party say whether or not they stand for the universal application of medicare to all citizens without any means test. We are very anxious to hear just that.

The hon. member for Saskatoon took my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre to task for urging the minister to press on with medicare by introducing enabling legislation to allow the provinces to come in if they choose to comply with the four conditions laid down by the Prime Minister taken directly from the Hall Commission report. What the hon. member is suggesting is that the federal government should depart from the Hall Commission recommendations and allow each province to establish any kind of medicare program it wishes.

This means that persons moving from province to province would find totally different conditions for qualifying. We would find

that the transferability, the portability of medicare would be completely destroyed. The only way in which you can have national medicare is by having uniformity and the only way in which you can have uniformity is by having universal application so that people can move from Quebec to British Columbia or from Ontario to Nova Scotia and find they are capable of qualifying wherever they may go.

The hon. member for Saskatoon warned the minister against having medicare meet what he called the "long, rough road" it had in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Chairman, medicare only had a long, rough road in Saskatchewan because there were mossbacks like the member for Saskatoon who fought against its introduction. There have always been antediluvians who live in the past and who fight every kind of progressive measure when it is first introduced. Yet the medical profession in the province of Saskatchewan has since come out and said that the plan has been operating successfully.

Much of the opposition was totally unnecessary. I simply want to say that I hope the medical profession has learned from this experience and that its members are prepared to sit down with representatives of the government in Ottawa and with representatives of the various provincial governments to work out suitable arrangements whereby we can have the universal application of medicare to all Canadian citizens.

Let them make no mistake about this. They can fight rearguard actions. They can make the kind of speeches we heard this afternoon from the hon. member for Saskatoon. But the great bulk of the Canadian people want universal medicare and they are going to have it in spite of all the reactionaries, and I want to say to the minister that the people will give him their wholehearted support if he has the courage to put the legislation on the statute books.

Mr. Skoreyko: If the Minister of National Health and Welfare introduces the kind of program which the hon. member suggests, would he risk his seat in Burnaby-Coquitlam so as to allow the minister to be re-elected?

● (5:00 p.m.)

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No. The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam would come over here.

Mr. Brand: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I may be allowed to make a few brief remarks in