

Medicare

● (6:20 p.m.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The house will now resume the business interrupted at six o'clock.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Public Works thought of permitting us to have 40 minutes for a supper break?

Mr. Starr: Agreed.

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, the current debate has been going on at considerable length and we do not seem to be making much progress. During a supper hour we could get a few more speeches on the record and this would enable us to get on with the debate. I think everyone is eagerly awaiting passage of this bill.

Mr. Douglas: I can assure the minister that we would make a great deal more progress by having a supper hour than by sitting right through.

Mr. Winkler: Agreed.

Mr. McIlraith: No.

HEALTH AND WELFARE**MEDICARE—AUTHORIZATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD COST OF INSURED MEDICAL CARE**

The house resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen for the second reading of Bill No. C-227, to authorize the payment of contributions by Canada toward the cost of insured medical care services incurred by provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Rynard.

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, in participating in this debate I am inclined to disagree that we are not making any progress. This is a very important and vital matter to the people of this country and every member of this house may wish to express his opinion on this subject. I think that we have been making very good progress in dealing with this important matter.

I do not agree that we should rush this debate because, after all, the bill is not going anywhere. The government does not intend to pay the provinces anything for their medical services schemes until after July 1, 1968. If the government were to come forward and amend the bill to help those who are not now covered in provinces which have no medicare scheme and were to give those provinces

[Mr. Webb.]

encouragement by contributing 50 per cent out of federal funds to cover medical care for the needy and the poor, especially in the maritime provinces where the people cannot afford any coverage at all, there would be a great deal of urgency to this whole matter and we should put the bill through so that these people might receive coverage now. But the government is not prepared to do this.

The government says that we should put the bill through because they have to prepare to put it into effect possibly after July 1, 1968. What is the rush? Is it merely a question of passing this bill which will authorize the federal government to pay 50 per cent of the cost to any province which puts into effect a medicare scheme so that the Liberals can wave it around the country and enable the government to say that they were responsible for this?

What is to be done for the people who are not covered now? Will they have to suffer and carry the heavy cost of medical services in this country until 1968 simply because this government is torn asunder by a political battle in the cabinet and in the caucus? Who are the victims of the battle that has been raging within their midst? The victims are the people of this country.

I charge, Mr. Speaker, that the government has been playing politics with this very important matter. It has postponed the effective date of this legislation until July 1, 1968, for no purpose except a political one to pacify those in the cabinet and in the caucus who feel that the financial participation of the federal government will cause inflation. This step has been taken to combat the present inflation. Even if this bill does pass in its present form permitting the government to participate financially in this medicare scheme, the bill will not go into effect until July 1, 1968.

I suggest that the government should consider the position of the provinces which are not able to finance a medicare scheme for their own people. These provinces should be given an incentive now, not on July 1, 1967 or July 1, 1968, but now, to look after their needy and poor who cannot look after themselves.

The Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions that our objective is to have full medicare in operation on Canada's 100th birthday, July 1, 1967". This was the theme throughout the election campaign last November. The Prime Minister promised the people of this nation medicare by July 1, 1967