

The Address—Mr. Douglas

able to qualify at whatever rate they are willing to move.

There are some provinces who have an adequate number of doctors in ratio to their population and who, very quickly, could qualify for medical care. Then, they could move on to dental care and other health services. Some provinces would take longer to qualify. However, the fastest way in which comprehensive, universal medicare could be established in this country would be for the government to bring legislation before this house to give the provinces a series of objectives toward which they could move. If some provinces move more quickly than others, they will get the benefits more quickly. If other provinces are tardy, then it will take them a greater length of time before they get the full benefit.

This question of health insurance, Mr. Speaker, has been bandied around by the Liberal party for some 46 years. I want to say how disappointed we are that the very best they could tell us now is, if I may quote:

My government believes that public policy should be directed to improving the quality of health services and to ensuring that all Canadians can obtain needed health care, irrespective of their ability to pay.

There is no commitment here for a universal, comprehensive, all-embracing medicare program; no commitment here for health insurance that will be government sponsored and government operated. The phrases which have been used in the Speech from the Throne could apply equally well to an insurance company operated plan or to a plan which the Hall commission—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, I have to interrupt the hon. member to inform him his time has expired, unless he has unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Douglas: I should like to thank hon. members and I will only take two or three minutes to finish.

Within the terms used in the speech from the throne, it would be quite possible to have a medicare system in which the people of this country would be divided into two categories, those who are able to pay the premiums for an insurance company sponsored plan and those who, under a means test, would have their premiums paid in whole or in part by the government. This kind of plan was examined and rejected, rejected outright, by the Hall commission. However, nowhere in this speech from the

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throne does the government say it is determined to proceed with the kind of medicare program which the Hall commission outlined for the people of this country.

I should like to conclude by saying that a new era in human history has been ushered in. It brings with it rich benefits for those nations who know how to use it. The failure to make the necessary adjustments is fraught with danger. The tempo of technological change is being speeded up. We have only a few years left in which to meet the challenge of a scientific age. There is nothing in the speech from the throne to indicate that the government is alive either to the opportunity or to the dangers that confront us. If the government fails to create the desirable goals and lead the Canadian people in a crusade for their realization, then we shall be plunged into unemployment, economic stagnation and human misery. This is the time for decision. To use the Prime Minister's own words, when I read the speech from the throne I could find nothing in it that would either excite the daring or test the strong.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be able to take part in this debate in reply to the speech from the throne. I should like first to congratulate the Mover (Mr. Cashin) and the Seconder (Mr. Chrétien). As young men, capable and dedicated to the work of the House of Commons, the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Cashin) and the hon. member for St. Maurice-Lafèche (Mr. Chrétien), are certainly worthy of the honour the government bestowed upon them. However, I think it might have been more befitting if both of them had been present today to listen to the contributions of the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) and the leaders of the other parties.

• (9:10 p.m.)

In the first place I believe the government is to be commended on the throne speech, for picking up the diligent and constructive work carried on during the last session by the special committee on procedure and organization. As we move farther away from the last session I believe the work that was accomplished during it will come into more clearly defined perspective, and it will be recognized that one of the most constructive pieces of work was that accomplished by the special committee on procedure.

I am sure that during the dying days of the last session all of us were concerned that the results of the committee's work might be lost.