

*Medicare*

We have now been advised in the past two or three days by the self-same Minister of National Health and Welfare that we shall vote on second reading on the same bill in principle that was introduced a few months ago but that after adopting the principle on second reading it will be amended so as to postpone it for a further year until July 1, 1968. I say that the Liberal government has definitely betrayed the commitment and trust given to the people of Canada. It has betrayed not only the people of Canada but also the House of Commons both in respect of the statements made and the trust. Surely it is understandable that henceforth because of this betrayal the people cannot trust the Liberal party in the future nor can the House of Commons trust statements made by a Liberal Prime Minister and another cabinet minister in the House of Commons because they themselves have proven that they are guilty of betrayal.

• (4:30 p.m.)

It goes beyond that, Mr. Speaker. It is my contention that the government in general—I do not like to say this but I refer to the Minister of National Health and Welfare in particular—have not only betrayed their commitment and their trust but by their actions they have and are aiding and abetting influences in this country which would undermine the parliamentary system itself. In 33 years of campaigning I think I have stated at every meeting I have attended that I believe the parliamentary system is the greatest institution ever devised by man for the solution of man's problems. I stand by that proposition. It is also my belief that in the past few years, the last two or three in particular, the institution of parliament has been undermined and brought into ill repute and disrespect because in this forum there has been too much of personalities, prejudices and party expediency. As a result, "politician" to many people is now a dirty word. Convinced as I am about the correctness of what I say, let me add that in my estimation this Liberal government has done more to bring the institution of parliamentary democracy into ill repute and disrepute in the last few days than any other government by its actions over the years. They have done so by their betrayal of a commitment and a trust.

I have listened with a great deal of interest to the majority of the speeches made during the second reading stage of this bill, as a result of which I believe I now have an understanding of the position being taken by

[Mr. Winch.]

the various parties. The Liberals are in favour of universal over-all medicare and want this bill passed in principle, but they want to postpone its effectiveness from year to year. The Conservatives also believe in a system of universal medicare, but rather than supporting over-all coverage they have moved an amendment which, if adopted, will effectively block any introduction of universal over-all medicare in Canada for at least the next 12 to 14 years. That is what they will accomplish if they have their way.

It is also evident from speeches made by members of that party that they believe universal over-all coverage can only be adopted on the basis of a priority given to private enterprise. This makes it evident that they put the profits of private enterprise in the medical insurance field ahead of the health and well-being of the people of Canada under a government operated non-profit system. To me this is a completely anti-social, inexplicable and unreasonable attitude on the part of a political party in this day and age.

I must admit I am not quite certain where the members of the Social Credit and Cr ditiste parties stand, but I think I am correct in saying that no matter what their final position is it will be a waffling one and one of political expediency, because that is their record in this house.

The position of the New Democratic Party is well known. We stand for universal over-all medicare in Canada and we mean by that a plan instituted now. We will, however, accept the commencement of this plan on July 1 of next year and will do everything in our power to block any postponement of the effective date. We intend to be, if I may put it this way, the conscience of the Liberal party in order to prevent it from postponing its commitment further. Just as we try to reclaim and save those who break the law, we are going to try to reclaim and save those political heathen who have betrayed Canadians by proposing that medicare be postponed.

We were very glad to hear this afternoon that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) is going to speak on this bill during the committee stage. Personally I would prefer him to speak during second reading. As a matter of fact, he owes it to this house and the people of Canada to make it known on what basis he reached the decision to exercise his whip of persuasion and get the cabinet and the Liberal party to agree to this postponement. He owes it to us, when we are discussing the