

Government Organization

matter is in order I would ask the hon. member this question. He referred to medicare. My understanding is that he has asked questions in the house indicating that he is desirous of having its coverage extended, and I believe that he and his party supported the measure when it came before the house. Unless I am wrong I understand he supports medicare. Is that correct?

Mr. Rynard: Mr. Chairman, I am delighted to see the minister get up and state what he stated because he referred in his Hamilton speech, if I remember correctly, to this point. He knows where I stand on that question as well as I do. He also knows what I am getting at. Coming back to what I was saying, I point out that the suggestion was that the Canada Assistance Plan be used to pay the premiums for those 28 per cent to 30 per cent who find it very difficult to meet their medical needs. As the Canadian Medical Association points out:

The governments of Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta have demonstrated a realistic workable approach to the provision of medical care insurance.

● (3:20 p.m.)

It continues:

Mr. Trudeau assumed the leadership of the Liberal Party in April, 1968, and since that time has said very little about medicare. During the election campaign he stated that "medicare was the law of the land".

Farther on we find this:

On July 1, 1968, two provinces—British Columbia and Newfoundland—joined medicare. Eight provinces did not. Four of these indicated that they would initiate medicare programs in 1969, but the remaining four—including the two most populous provinces, Ontario and Quebec—made no commitment and the Prime Ministers and the Ministers of Finance of Ontario and Quebec have indicated on a number of occasions that medicare is far down their list of priorities.

They just cannot afford it. Then it says:

We have never been able to meet with the Prime Minister to discuss with him essential matters of policy—

These are the men with whom the government must work. They are the men who will have to put up with medicare and make it work. I think there will be problems no matter how hard the medical men try to make it successful, but nevertheless the co-operation of that group is essential. They say they have never been able to meet with the Prime Minister. Then they go on to say:

In recent weeks our Association has been greatly concerned with statements in the public press, attributed to federal and provincial government

[Mr. Munro.]

leaders as well as business leaders, relating to the cost of medical services insurance. We think it is time the Canadian Medical Association had an opportunity of discussing the problems and solutions of medical care insurance with you and your ministers.

We would like to refute such public statements as that made by your Minister of Finance who stated: "We need medicare because private enterprise, which serves the country best in so many fields, cannot bring comprehensive coverage at reasonable cost to the bulk of the population." He also implied that the increase in doctors' fees has been the main reason for the rising cost of health care.

There are many reasons for the rising costs of medical care, the chief one of which is the increasing utilization of medical services generated largely by the public, but to some extent by the medical profession. This has been well demonstrated in the United Kingdom and in Saskatchewan. On the other hand, the increases in medical fees have not been greater than increases in the wages and salaries of other Canadians.

We would also like to point out the problems of delivering medical care to the people of Canada, under the universal program your government is advocating, when the supply of the presently overburdened doctors—

I want the minister to take careful note of this.

—will remain constant for some time. It would be much less costly and more to the point to assist those people who are now not covered with medical care insurance because of the lack of funds or other reasons.

I hope you will give us the opportunity, in the near future, to meet with you and your appropriate ministers in order that our Association may present to you the problems of providing medical care to the people of Canada, and some practical solutions to your medical care program.

Mr. Munro: All right, you have put it on the record.

Mr. Rynard: I continue:

To date we have received no indication that the Prime Minister intends to meet with us.

This is not an old publication I am reading. It is dated March 8, 1969.

We believe that our desire to meet with him and senior members of his cabinet is a reasonable request. These are the persons who collectively establish governmental policy on a wide range of matters which are extremely important to the profession—manpower, allocation of funds for hospitals, medical research—

Here we are at medical research.

Mr. Munro: You finally got there.

Mr. Rynard: I continue:

As the voice of organized medicine in Canada we believe that we have a responsibility to present to the Prime Minister and his cabinet the views of the profession on these important matters.