

Medicare

after 47 disgraceful years of duplicity and dangling in front of the electorate, something to win votes at election time. If they will do this, they can bring in something of which the people of this country can be proud, and in which we can all participate with great benefit to the health of the people of this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Dollard): Mr. Speaker, the medicare scheme announced by the present Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) is in fact the crowning achievement of the social program which the Liberal party has been implementing over the years. And the present Minister of National Health and Welfare can take pride in having put into force the last of the measures planned in the past and in doing it too quickly according to several people. When we see our friends in the New Democratic Party indulging in sarcasm, it is probably because they were taken by surprise by the vigour with which the Minister of National Health and Welfare implemented that program and they were taken off guard to such an extent that today they can only find fault with the date on which the medicare scheme will come into force. Really it is a very minor complaint with regard to such an important measure.

In fact, that enables the opposition to create a diversion because as far as some opposition members are concerned, it was clear that the medicare scheme did not fit in at all in their program and that, on the contrary, if they had granted it, they would have done it only gradually to secure a few more votes in successive elections and to indulge in pure and simple electioneering. On the other hand, the Liberal party prefers to give the people a universal scheme by making it applicable in a year from now only, at the latest. It means that we are at odds now on a matter of timing. If the house supports the medicare scheme, are we really going to spend days on a matter of timing? If it were only a matter of ideology, if it were only a matter of saying that if the program is implemented on such a date for one group of people and much later for another, this debate would make sense. But when it is only a matter of timing, I think that we are dishonest in trying to drag on the debate only to indulge in electioneering.

For too long, as a young member, a back-bencher, I have seen this house used as a forum of the lowest order in Canadian

politics. That is unfortunate. And that the medicare scheme should be involved today is more unfortunate still.

We should show full cohesion in a field as vital as health. We should all agree on this legislation, as everything seems to indicate. If it only a matter of the date, let us not protract this debate, let us not try to show the Canadian people that we are in favour of this legislation, as an excuse, in fact, to fight it. One who wants to kill his dog says it has rabies.

Mr. Speaker, I also had a feeling of regret when the Minister of National Health and Welfare had to announce that the date for the coming into effect of the program would be postponed. But we must consider that this postponement may be for a few months only, since the legislation is very flexible on that point. Hence, if our friends of the opposition would rather take advantage of favourable economic circumstances which may occur before long to request medical care, we might all agree then, and very rapidly. But taking advantage of this legislation to continue this debate indefinitely is unfair, especially toward a minister who, until now, has fought unswervingly in the house to crown the social assistance system in Canada.

Therefore, as a back-bencher, I appeal to the opposition front-benchers in order that we may find ourselves in a more serene climate and that we may work toward the passage of legislation which would give rise to fruitful debates.

• (8:50 p.m.)

[*English*]

Mr. H. R. Ballard (Calgary South): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the amendment that has been moved by the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard), and I do this in all good conscience in spite of the remarks of the hon. member for York-Scarborough (Mr. Stanbury) who accused the opposition of trying to kill this bill. Actually, we are not trying to kill the concept of medical services in Canada, but we do feel that medicare as it is spelled out in the present bill is doomed to failure. Medicare in its present form is a dead duck.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that if a poll were taken across Canada there would be a resounding affirmation from the people that no person in this country should be denied the medical services which he requires, regardless of his or her ability to