

ing such havoc on the agricultural economy. The decline in wheat prices presents the government with an excellent opportunity to implement the wheat policy which it was argued into announcing in March of 1963. The two price system and the guarantee of \$2 a bushel would maintain the purchasing power of the prairie farmer and would boost his ability to buy the goods of eastern industry. Farmers, other than wheat farmers, need better deficiency payments and assistance in collection, storage, processing and marketing of their products. From 1949 to 1963 net farm income dropped by 9 per cent at the same time that the cost of food to the consumer went up by 12 per cent, and at a time when the food processing and beverage companies of this country more than doubled their profits.

I notice that the speech from the throne says that the government—

—is developing new policies to enable farmers generally to achieve larger and more reliable incomes—

They do not need to develop new programs; all they need to do is use some of the programs they advocated in the election campaign. They do not need new planks; they can use the planks left over from the 1963 election campaign. They are as good as new—they have never been used.

5. We advocate an increase in pensions. During the previous session we argued very strongly for raising old age security pensions to \$100 a month payable at age 65, not only on humanitarian grounds, because we believe that these people who have spent their lives in the service of this country, are entitled to comfort in their declining years, but also because this would be one of the quickest ways of stimulating the purchase of consumer goods. The government has a chance in this way to make a virtue out of necessity.

6. We believe that comprehensive, universal medicare for all Canadians under a government sponsored and government operated health insurance program would not only raise the health standards of the people of this country, but would also help to redistribute income and thereby increase the purchasing power of those in the lower income brackets.

● (9:00 p.m.)

I am going to move an amendment on this, Mr. Speaker, but I should like to make some remarks about it if I still have the time. I would like to move, seconded by the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher):

The Address—Mr. Douglas

That the amendment be amended by inserting therein, immediately after the words "because of confusion and indecision in dealing with national problems," the following words:

"including their failure to present specific proposals for a universal and comprehensive medicare program for all the people of Canada."

The government has no longer any excuse for not providing a comprehensive medicare program. They have had excuses in the past. The Liberal party have been talking about medicare since 1919. We have had the report from a royal commission, a report which in my opinion is probably the most extensive and exhaustive report on this subject that has been printed in the English language. This report says, first, that Canada needs medicare; second, it says that Canada can afford medicare; and third, it says the government should take action immediately within six months of receiving the report to call a federal-provincial conference in order to begin laying plans for its implementation.

Well, this report was tabled last June and nothing has happened. Now, the government says in the speech from the throne that it is going to call the first meeting of the governments of the provinces in order to discuss this matter. In several of the provinces phony medicare plans are being proposed with a view to forestalling a comprehensive national health insurance plan. If the federal government fails to act, and to act promptly, these plans will become established and we will set the clock back 25 years in our march toward national, comprehensive medicare. Action is needed at this session, not just to meet and discuss with the provinces.

The federal government knew for months before the Hall commission reported the views of the provinces because the provinces had submitted briefs to the Hall commission. They could have been ready with proposals. Instead of that they have allowed some nine or ten months to elapse without doing anything. Now, the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) tells us he is going to meet the provinces some time about the end of May. We say the federal government, in the light of the Hall commission report, in the light of the abundance of data and material which they have supplied, should be in a position to put legislation before parliament and place draft legislation before a federal-provincial conference, setting out the respective stages by which a province may move toward a comprehensive, complete health insurance program. We ought not to slow the provinces down to the pace of the slowest province. Provinces should be