

ciently urgent to warrant the government in taking emergency action to provide for the needs of the people, and then later we can consider what amendments should be made to the British North America Act permanently to meet the situation. But for the last six or seven years since this report was published, and for many a long year before that, we have been dilly-dallying with these questions. We had reason to hope that the government was going to take a strong line of action as indicated in the speech from the throne and in the Prime Minister's radio addresses, that something was to be done in a large way for the people of Canada, but we now find that we are to be put off with a meagre measure of this kind, and that merely a gesture is being made in regard to public health matters. I do not think parliament should be allowed to prorogue without the house insisting that something be done in the near future to meet the real and urgent needs of the people.

Mr. HOWDEN: I do not want my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre to leave a wrong impression with regard to medical conditions in our part of the country. He stated a little while ago that the medical conditions were appalling. Actually the conditions are not appalling. I do not believe that the people of our country, by and large certainly the people of greater Winnipeg, have ever before in the history of our country been quite so well supplied with medical services as they are at the present time. The difficulty is that the municipalities are having to pay for these services, and the municipalities are nearly all broke. As a matter of fact, the people in our part of the country at the present time are getting medical services such as they never had before. It is the doctors that are getting the worst of it. It is true that we had a near medical strike in Winnipeg. When the depression set in, the medical men of our part of the country were expected year after year to care for indigent people who had not a cent in the world to pay for their services. Eventually the time came when the doctors themselves were faced with the problem of bread and butter, and they had to strike or starve. So they did strike. And now, Mr. Chairman, the condition is this, that we get very small fees in Winnipeg, so small that I hesitate to state them, and it is quite unnecessary to do so at the present time. But I will go so far as to state with regard to these fees that from the several municipalities in what we call Greater Winnipeg no medical man can receive more than \$100 a month. He may be doing two or three or five hundred dollars' worth of

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

work for the joint municipalities of Greater Winnipeg, but he cannot collect for that work more than one hundred dollars a month. If a medical man's work consists largely in practice among people on relief, that is the amount of his income; and by the time he pays for his automobile upkeep, telephone, office expenditures and what not, it does not leave him with a very fat living. But let me say that there is not a person in our part of the country at the present time who cannot get medical attention. We have a hospital by-law whereby persons who require hospitalization can go to the hospital and the municipality has to pay that bill also. The difficulty is not with the people; they are getting very good medical attention now. But we need assistance for our municipalities and provinces, and I want to set that matter straight. What the Prime Minister has said with regard to the people is true. Starvation is a fine cure for many maladies in this life. It has been said by one scientist that most men dig their grave with their teeth, and that is true; and with the restricted diet which people at large have had for some time they have fortunately enjoyed a greater degree of health.

I do not believe that the criticism that has taken place to-night has anything to do with the matters that we have been discussing lately; it has been merely levelled at part IV of the bill, which seems useless and of no avail.

Mr. SPENCER: The hon. member who has just taken his seat took exception to the statement of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, that conditions were appalling; but I think his words substantiate that statement, because he said that the doctors, of whom there must be several hundreds in Winnipeg, had either to strike or to starve. If that is true then I certainly think my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre was right in describing the situation as appalling. The doctors do not decide to go on strike until things are in very bad shape indeed, and there are thousands of people who, rather than take relief or be unable to pay bills they may incur, put off until the last minute a visit to the doctor. May I remind the committee that for many years the fee paid a country doctor—it may be less now—was at the rate of \$1 per mile, and if a doctor went fifteen miles the fee was \$30. If he went to several patients on the same journey a similar fee was put in for each. I do not say that every doctor did that, but at any rate these fees cannot be paid by the people. If the doctors do go on strike—and I cannot blame them if