

Medicare

concerned it is now at dead centre. I think that was said by Peter Newman. I believe those words are twisted and that they should be "it is now at centre, dead". Peter Newman continued by saying that the party is now at dead centre with no motivating philosophy to carry it forward. If as a result of this action the people of Canada realize it is a myth that the Liberal party is a party of progress, perhaps the country can find ways to make gains in the months and years that lie ahead.

Let me go back to the first of my contentions in support of the suggestion that this is a sad day. I said that this action represents an open betrayal on the part of the government of its pledged word. I have already read the statement of the minister made on July 12, 1966, when he gave July 1, 1967, as the date on which this legislation was to become operative. May I just read one or two other quotations in support of this proposition, and let me add that before the 21 members of this party get through speaking on this matter all of these quotations will be read back to the Liberal party. I have here a clipping from the *Ottawa Citizen* of September 21, 1965, shortly after the opening of the election campaign of last fall. The clipping contains this sentence:

Prime Minister Pearson today announced a pledge to have a full medicare scheme operating in Canada by July 1, 1967.

The article goes on to state that this pledge was made during a speech to Liberal candidates. No wonder Liberals at the grass roots, Liberal candidates and Liberal M.P.s across the country are concerned. They were given this word directly from on high that July 1, 1967, was the date. They campaigned on the basis of this statement and said that people did not have to vote for the New Democratic Party in order to get medicare because they would get it with the Liberals. The fact of the matter is that that promise was as clear and forthright as it could be, but it meant nothing.

Let me read the headline of an article which appeared in the *Toronto Star* of September 23, 1965. It states "Medicare Plan by July 1, 1967, Hellyer Promises Scarborough". The story indicates that this statement was made in a speech by the Minister of National Defence at a convention which nominated Robert Stanbury to contest York-Scarborough, Canada's biggest riding. Maybe it was Canada's biggest riding in which the promise was made, but it is also one of the biggest hoaxes we have had for a long time.

● (5:00 p.m.)

When this session of parliament got under way, hon. members will probably recall that it was not long before I was on my feet in the question period trying to get a commitment out of the government as to the bringing in of this legislation and its effective date. Two or three times in the month of February I urged that we have a clearcut statement on this matter, and the first few times the answers were a bit evasive or the Minister of National Health and Welfare would say, "The previous position still stands." But finally, after two or three answers to questions that were fairly definite, we got the statement of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, made on his own on May 17, 1966, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 5213, that the government had decided that medicare was going to come into effect on July 1, 1967, whether or not all or a majority of the provinces were ready. The statement was clearcut, namely, that the legislation would be in effect on that date for those provinces that were ready to take advantage of it. So from the Minister of National Health and Welfare and from the Prime Minister we had the repeated assurance that the effective date of this legislation would be July 1, 1967.

I suggest that the government, which made that promise as firmly as it did, cannot expect this house or the country to put any credence in the promise it now makes that it will be July 1, 1968. A government that can break a promise in the field of medicare as often as the Liberals have broken it cannot be trusted to carry out the promise that it now makes, and these firm assurances that we will have medicare by July 1, 1968, are just not worth the time it takes to make them.

Maybe my hon. friends to my right want this bill to go to a committee and be studied. They want more work done on it. There is right now an amendment they are trying to have accepted. They are helping the government, of course, to delay this legislation, and I expect it will be further delayed if the Liberals stay in power.

I make the suggestion that the government might do this on a really historic basis. They do not like my trotting out this 1919 book. They say, "Oh, there is the old 1919 line again." I am almost wearing out the book by bringing it into this house so often. I remember that when I first came here in 1942 I was astounded that the promises which had been made 23 years before had not been put into effect. Now we are up to 47 years. It was