

Medicare

We are on the horns of a dilemma. If I could trust the government to do what they have expressed their willingness to do I would support second reading. But I cannot because I do not think they have any intention to make any fundamental changes except in the date by moving it on a year.

Having stated my views, Mr. Speaker, how shall I vote? I am going to vote, of course, for the amendment. Second, if there is a choice later between the proposal we have before us and a better one, I will choose the other one. If voting against this bill will force introduction of another and better bill, then I will vote against it. Finally, if there is a choice between some type of medical care or none, I will vote for medical care now. We will have to see how things develop during the debate. Whatever happens to the amendments—and the other parties may bring forward amendments or the government may do so—I hope some good sense will find its way into the minds of the government members so that as a beginning we will have a responsible medical care plan for the needy and for the low income people immediately. If it has to be expanded later, that will be up to the provinces and not the federal government.

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend who has just taken his seat would be called a hell-dodger in religious circles in respect of his last remarks.

Mr. Aiken: What?

Mr. Winch: A hell-dodger, one who goes to every church in the hope that when he dies he will not go to hell but to heaven. The hon. member has taken the same position on medical care. He has introduced so many "ifs" and "buts" that he is a political hell-dodger hoping he will come out on top no matter what happens. If that is not an example of political expediency demonstrating the attitude of Conservatives on this matter, then I have not heard one.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, I do not know exactly what the hon. member's words mean. I am expressing an honest opinion. I do not care whether he likes it or not, and I do not care whether I am being philosophical. I believe in medical care for the needy.

Mr. Winch: Of course my hon. friend is expressing his honest opinion. A hell-dodger wants to get to heaven and goes to every church in the hope he will go there. My

friend is the same. He wants to be on the top of the heap no matter what comes out. He uses all these "ifs" and "buts" so that, despite his tribulations, he can go to the people and say: "This is what I stand for because I stood for everything".

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak on second reading of this most important bill now before us. I appreciate the opportunity to speak this afternoon because it will not be possible for me to be in my seat tomorrow. A subcommittee of the joint committee of the House of Commons and Senate on penitentiaries is going to make its first visit to a penitentiary, namely, St. Vincent de Paul.

When I think of a penitentiary, Mr. Speaker, I think of the inmates, and when I think of the inmates I cannot help but think of the relationship between the inmates and the Liberal government so far as medicare is involved. Inmates of a penitentiary are considered to be anti-social because they have broken the law of the land, because they have not accepted a commitment and because they have not demonstrated an understanding of what authority, commitment or responsibility means to people generally. On this issue I have in my mind this relationship between the inmates in a penitentiary and the present Liberal government. I believe it is a very definite one because, in light of the basic principles of morals and ethics, the Liberals gave a commitment of policy to the people of Canada in the last election. Every Liberal candidate gave a commitment to the electorate. That commitment was a trust, because when you are running for election and give a commitment you are giving a trust that the promises you make you will fulfil.

What was the promise given by every Liberal candidate? The promise in the Liberal program was that if they were returned as a government they would immediately introduce and put into operation a universal over-all medicare plan. That was the commitment, Mr. Speaker; it was a trust to the people of Canada. I speak not only of the campaign, because I shall make reference to speeches made in this House of Commons only a few short months ago when the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) gave a commitment to the members of the House of Commons that the medical insurance bill would be proceeded with and go into operation on July 1 of next year.