

Medicare

I suppose he meant that a mere promise which had been made repeatedly for 47 years lacked any electoral persuasive power, while a target date sounded a lot better and, after all, it would not be too difficult to find a pretext for changing the target date after the election.

The government spokesmen, after the election, continued to stick to what they themselves described as a pledge. In the *Star* of February 2, 1966 Mr. Michael Best wrote an article in which he said the Pearson government was brimming with confidence that its battle for national medicare in 1967 had been won and all that remained was a clean-up operation. We have had a clean-up, but it did not come from the right direction. This optimism was voiced, apparently, by the present Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) who said that most, if not all, of the provinces would be in on medicare when the plan started on July 1, 1967.

An hon. Member: That was before he became a "Sharpie" too.

Mr. Brewin: On April 1 the *Globe and Mail* produced a story headlined "Cabinet Reaffirms 1967 Start For medicare". The story led off with the statement, "Medicare Start By July 1, 1967 Ottawa Pledge". On May 17, 1966 the *Star* told us that a national medicare program to start on July 1, 1967 "appeared certain today with the announcement by health minister MacEachen that health services will start no matter how many provinces are in the program by that date." He is quoted as follows:

There will be no retreat by Ottawa from either the July 1967 date or from the four basic conditions. The plan will commence on Canada's 100th birthday.

Those are the words of the present minister as recently as May 17. I say to the minister that I have a great deal of respect for him but I would have even more respect if, when his colleagues failed to live up to the pledge so clearly and so publicly made by him on their behalf, he had chosen to resign from the cabinet.

On May 18 of this year the *Toronto Star*, under the heading "National Medicare Proud Liberal Achievement", published an editorial in which it said:

The Liberal government's conclusive commitment to introduce a national medicare program on July 1, 1967, whether all the provinces signed up or not, redeems the pledge that has been gathering dust for the past 47 years.

Then on July 7 the Prime Minister told this house that the government would bring forward a resolution and seek approval with the least possible delay. It was only after that that the medicare bill, against the protest of the members of this party, was held over until the end of the planned recess in October.

On August 2—you will realize I am using Liberal quotations throughout—a prominent Liberal, Eric Kierans, who apparently knew something not revealed to the public, is quoted in the *Star* as saying:

National medicare plan may be delayed by up to four years because of indecisive federal leadership.

As late as August 3 the Prime Minister is quoted as saying that Ottawa would stand by its medicare plans. At that time he referred once again to the government's offer as being available to the provinces on July 1, 1967, although he said that that was not the deadline for provincial acceptance. Then on September 9 this year we find a headline in the *Star*, "Medicare Pigeonholed Again". It was neither the Prime Minister nor the Minister of National Health and Welfare but the Minister of Finance who made the announcement in this house.

The *Toronto Star* described this in language which, coming from a journalistic supporter of the Liberal administration, is stronger than I as an opponent would perhaps choose. Under the heading "Medicare Delay Is Outrageous Deceit" the Canadian Press report said:

Canadian people have been deceived and disappointed in their expectation of health insurance by the party which began promising it in 1919. Federal medicare is to be postponed for a year on the excuse—and it is merely an excuse—that this is necessary to fight inflation. The one year postponement would be bad enough for the four million Canadians who have medical insurance coverage—the six million who have none at all. Who in view of the 47 year record of Liberal non-fulfilment of this promise, can have any confidence that the delay will only be for one year. This latest betrayal of medicare and of Health Minister Allan MacEachen, was accomplished in the manner of a Machiavellian intrigue.

Later in the article they say:

Whether the Prime Minister was in on the scheme or not, it is clear that the conservative wing of the cabinet has succeeded, temporarily at least, in sacrificing medicare on the altar of sound finance.

A day or two later members of this house within the Liberal caucus met at Peterborough and, in view of what they said at the time, it really is quite unnecessary for me to