

The Budget—Mr. Garson

says he was trying to bury something last Friday, the only thing I know that he was trying to bury was the Tory party. There are some people who suggest that the Prime Minister is not aware of the fact that the Tory party has been buried already.

Mr. Drew: Do I take it from what the minister has said that the speech of the Prime Minister was entirely a political speech and not intended to be taken seriously?

Mr. Martin: Was the Prime Minister's speech political? I hope it was. Have we reached the stage where it is a wrong thing in this House of Commons to make a political speech?

Mr. Fleming: Evidently not at this moment.

Mr. Martin: Then as to the question my hon. friend has asked, my hon. friend knows that question is of another order. My hon. friend knows that the answer to that question depends upon authorities outside of this house. I refer my hon. friend to what the Prime Minister of Canada said on that subject, and which represented the policy of the government of Canada, on July 9, 1953. I read this into the record of this house on June 19 last, but as it is such a good statement my colleague the Minister of Finance suggests that it would bear repetition. The Prime Minister said:

The ninth subject I wish to refer to is health insurance and social security generally. The Liberal party is committed to support a policy of contributory health insurance to be administered by the provinces.

Mr. Knowles: And has been since 1919.

Mr. Martin: There is the voice from Assiniboia.

Mr. Argue: Wrong again.

Mr. Knowles: It is a good riding, but it does not happen to be mine.

Mr. Martin: I continue with what the Prime Minister said:

But, under our federal system, to get health insurance started the people and the government of the various provinces have to take the initiative in working out plans adapted to local conditions.

We are ready to assist in a sensible and practical nation-wide scheme, but that depends on satisfactory agreements with the provincial governments.

I am more convinced than ever that this is a field which should, as far as practicable, be left to provincial administration. Conditions differ vastly from one province to another, and services which are suitable for one region are quite unsuitable to another. We now have had a great deal of experience with health schemes of all kinds in this country, including full-fledged hospital insurance in two of our provinces.

But I do not think it would be fair to the taxpayers of Canada in all the provinces to make federal contributions to provincial schemes in only one or two provinces. Federal contributions

should be regarded as a supplement and an even-ought when most of the provinces are prepared to undertake satisfactory schemes.

And it is Liberal policy to go on improving federal health grants which have done so much to place all the provinces in a better position to discharge their primary responsibility in this important field.

Health insurance is one aspect of the over-all social security program which the Liberal party set out to realize after the war. From time to time improvements will be needed in it and in our veterans' charter. And under a Liberal government they will be improved when circumstances warrant and the resources are available.

I verily believe that only under a Liberal government can we look for further and responsible measures of reform.

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister to answer the question I put to him, which apparently he has overlooked. Are the 1945 proposals of the federal government in relation to health insurance among those which were—whichever way you wish to put it—withdrawn or buried or scuttled by the Prime Minister last Friday?

Mr. Martin: My hon. friend and I were classmates, and I have a high appreciation of his intelligence. I know perfectly well that his question is not intended to elicit information which he already possesses, but rather to embarrass me; and that he cannot do. In any event, our policy on health insurance is contained in the Prime Minister's statement which I have just read.

Mr. Fleming: Whatever may be the effect on the minister, will he answer the question?

Hon. Stuart S. Garson (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, after the masterly refutation to which we have just listened it would be certainly an act of supererogation on my part if I should attempt to further pulverize the remnants of the argument of the Leader of the Opposition. But one point was raised by the hon. gentleman to which I must reply as a matter of personal privilege, because as he developed it, it was almost a reflection upon my veracity. I refer to the statements which he has imputed to me concerning the responsibility for the breakdown of the dominion-provincial conference of 1945, and those parts of the *Hansard* of this 1945 conference which he placed on the record in support of his argument on this point today.

I do not like doing this, because it is the first occasion upon which I have had to take issue with my hon. friend since he returned to the house. Like all other hon. members I am as delighted as I can be to see him back again, not lacking in all his former vehemence and vigour. But as was said by one hon. member of the house, the public may take their choice. The Leader of the Opposition placed some material on the record, and