

• (4:00 p.m.)

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend will appreciate that prior to the declaration of the Prime Minister with respect to this medical care program there had been a very exhaustive study made by the Hall commission into all aspects of health services in Canada, and all the relevant information is set out in that particular report. Since that declaration of principle by the Prime Minister last year, there has been a full opportunity for the provinces, for all the professions and for the public to express their views with regard to a medical care program. In the light of that the government concluded it would not be desirable or necessary to send this bill to a committee after second reading.

Mr. Aiken: May I ask a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker? Would the minister not agree that this house is not bound by a royal commission nor is the house interested in discussing and examining evidence of a royal commission? A specific bill is before us. Would the minister not agree that this is a case where the house should examine witnesses and, independent of the evidence given before any royal commission, hear evidence in the same manner as on the Canada Pension Plan? Granted this did not do very much good, but it was worth an argument.

Mr. MacEachen: The bill is a very short one. It sets out very clear principles and the house will be asked to accept those principles. The actual operation of the medical care programs will be undertaken by the provincial governments, and the actual techniques and relationships with the medical profession will be dealt with at the provincial level. In those circumstances I think it would be quite unnecessary to have a committee set up here.

Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe East): Mr. Speaker, I am very appreciative of the position in which the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) finds himself today. He has been quartered and hung on the altar of political expediency by commuted sentence. I congratulate him on the clear and distinct way he has presented this bill. However, he gave no fundamental reason why it should not be passed now and put into effect on July 1, 1967. Why is this not being done? The answer has been that the reason is to curb inflation, but to me this appears to be a completely ridiculous reason.

Medicare

The implementation of this program would involve an expenditure of only \$80 million at the most, and only \$40 million of that would come from the federal treasury. The reason for the delay has nothing to do with inflation. The bill would not come into effect until July 1, 1967 and the total expenditure would not be felt until the year 1968, so how could it affect inflation at the present time? Perhaps some of the taxes withheld from corporations and the increase in income tax revenues totalling over \$300 million could have been used to finance this program.

According to a report in the *Globe and Mail*, the hon. member for Kingston (Mr. Benson) had this to say:

Mr. Benson, who doubles as president of the government treasury board, pulled no punches in his short, direct speech.

He told the workshop that he was not much interested in economic arguments as to the inflationary effect of medicare.

How about this, Mr. Sharp.

According to the same newspaper report, the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Sharp) told the convention that "we could not afford all these huge expenditures". But he assured them his July 1, 1968 date for medicare to go into operation was firm and that on this "there could be no compromise." Well, you have already compromised, not once but many times. He went on to say "Canada is going to have medicare, and it will be the Liberal party that will introduce it." But after two years perhaps we will be faced with the same problem again. Mr. Templeton, who contested the Ontario leadership, is quoted in this press report as follows:

"said the conference must accept the government's decision or register non-confidence in the cabinet. He criticized the government for poor planning in making a commitment it could not keep and for not satisfactorily explaining the reason for the deferral.

There is a further question of whether or not this government did any homework on the bill. Was this plan deliberately held up? Was there sincerity in the government's approach to the premiers of the provinces or did the government deliberately lay down rules that they knew would be unacceptable because the government held the aces in the form of dollars? An editorial in the *Gazette* covers this question rather well, and I quote:

Again this week at the Liberal party convention in Ottawa, the debate was resumed and was taken to the floor of the convention. More acrimonious words were thrown back and forth among the delegates on the question of the postponement of medicare.