

Medicare

convey to him the good wishes of all of us on this side, and I am sure of all of us in the house, for a speedy recovery.

Mr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I was paired with the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Ryndard). Had I voted I would have voted against the amendment.

Mr. Faulkner: Mr. Speaker, I was paired with the hon. member for Prince (Mr. MacDonald). I would have voted against the amendment.

Mr. Groos: Mr. Speaker, I was paired. Had I voted I would have voted against the amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I was paired with the hon. member for Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata (Mr. Gendron). Had I voted, I would have voted for the amendment.

[English]

Mr. More: Mr. Speaker, I was paired with the hon. member for Norfolk (Mr. Roxburgh). Had I voted I would have voted for the amendment.

Mr. McCutcheon: Mr. Speaker, I too was paired.

Mr. Speaker: If the minister speaks now he will close the debate.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, not having had the opportunity of speaking on the amendment I wish to make certain remarks, which I trust will not be long, in regard to this bill. I have no apologies to make to anyone with regard to the length of this debate. This is a most important measure which deserves full consideration, although I must say that I cannot recognize the urgency of debate attached to the matter by hon. members opposite and hon. members to the left of me. After all, the only reason the bill is up before us now is, I think, the rather undue haste on the part of the government as a result of the internecine warfare which they conducted recently at their own party's biennial convention. I would have thought that it would have been more incumbent upon the members of this house to discuss matters which are of just as great import to the country and of greater urgency than a bill which we are told will perhaps come into effect by July 1, 1968. Why the date July, 1968 is picked, I do not know.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) and others, in justifying the government's stand on the proposed amendment in connection with the effective date of this legislation, have indicated that the reason for postponing the date is inflation at this time and in 1967, and also perhaps due to some stringency of funds. Unless something very drastic and dramatic happens between now and 1968, one has no assurance that the situation will be any better then, and in fact it could conceivably be much worse. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, their arguments in regard to this delay are, frankly, somewhat spurious. The delay was really the result of a compromise achieved within the inner workings of the Liberal party in order to reconcile diametrically opposed positions taken by various segments of that party in regard to this proposed legislation.

In view of the rejection of our four conditions, it is interesting to note the opposition to this legislation at the time of the last election and to observe the sort of "Yes", "No" and "Perhaps" answers that were given by the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) during that election campaign, particularly when he came into the province of Alberta, in order to try to justify, even to accept, the stand taken by some of the Liberal candidates in the province who themselves categorically opposed the legislation. In my own city my Liberal opponent, a medical doctor, was opposed to the legislation. The Liberal candidate in the constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona was also opposed to the legislation.

● (4:50 p.m.)

May I say that generally legislation on a compulsory basis does not find favour with persons in Alberta, and I speak on behalf of my constituents in large numbers. I have the honour to represent a constituency ranking among the first ten in this country in population. The people of the provinces of Alberta have demonstrated their thorough objection to the proposal of the government. I want to say therefore what I should like to have said in the debate on the amendment, namely, that the government is trying to ram down the throats of the people a preconceived doctrinaire plan. This is a doctrinaire plan rammed down the throats of the provincial governments which have equal jurisdiction with regard to medical services and health.

If I may say so, this plan shows a complete about-face on the part of the government. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen), his predecessor in that