

Medicare

The second reason is that the Hall report had made it very clear that we in this country do not have nearly enough doctors, dentists, nurses and medical technicians to enable this plan to operate successfully. If a crash program is not started immediately to produce the additional personnel we are going to need, they are not going to be available for many years to come. So we see, Mr. Speaker, that the reasons for the postponement of this plan are not monetary, but political. This is a prime example I believe, of the political duplicity of the government in avoiding a solemn election pledge which it gave during the last election, namely, that when elected, it would immediately introduce a medicare program. It is obvious that the promise given during the election was not intended to be kept, and in my opinion that is political duplicity.

This government wants to avoid political humiliation by introducing a plan before the next election; a plan which has been rejected by the provinces in which 85 per cent of the people of this country live; a plan which will not have anything like the medical personnel which will be needed to enable it to operate successfully. This plan, like so many other legislative measures which have been presented to this house by the government, has been presented in haste, with a great lack of preparation and consultation with the provinces who, after all, are the ones who will have to make the plan operate successfully. It was presented at the last election simply to win votes, and without any thought of how it would work. The government now intends to try to keep the plan in cold storage for another two years. It has a very definite plan in mind. This plan is, as everybody well knows now, for the Liberal party to have a leadership contest a year from now. Following that leadership convention, they intend to call an election—

An hon. Member: Are you going to run, George?

Mr. Hees:—in the spring, I am a member of a party, Mr. Speaker, which is proud of its policies, not ashamed of them. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that plan is to call an election in the spring of 1968, before the date this government has said it intends to bring in this medicare plan. So, once again we are going to have medicare promised in yet another election, just as it has been during the past 47 years. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has

[Mr. Hees.]

pointed out that in every election since 1919 we have heard the same old promises, the same speeches, the same words, and seen the same duplicity from the same old gang. The same intentions to bring it in have been announced, and then it has been put aside, brought out and dusted off, to be presented at the next election. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is once again the plan of this government. I think this government is a government that finds it very difficult to stick to any plan it makes. The trumpets are blown and there is a call for a charge, then very soon afterwards you see the humiliating retreat after the errors and lax planning are pointed out by the opposition.

I think this time this government knows what it wants to do. It wants to introduce medicare once again, before it has the humiliation of putting it into operation and trying to make it work. The way things are going at the present time, it is obvious that unless very great changes are made, the majority of the people in this country are not going to be brought into the plan. This would make it impossible to operate. By July 1, 1968, there are not going to be nearly enough trained medical personnel available to make the plan operate successfully. I suggest to this government that they now go back to the drawing board and replace their plan with one that is operating successfully in this country, the plan introduced in the province of Ontario not long ago. This plan has in it one and three quarter million citizens of the province of Ontario. It is operating on a voluntary basis, and it has been found extremely satisfactory to the citizens of Ontario. I suggest to this government that they go back and redraft their plan on the basis of the successful plan which the province of Ontario has introduced.

I suggest if they do so that they would have a very good chance of having the majority of the provinces in this country go along with that plan, and make it not only a possibility, but a reality. I believe the government should also start a crash program on a twelve months basis for training the great number of additional doctors, dentists, nurses and technicians which are going to be needed to make this plan operate successfully, and without which no plan can operate successfully. If they will do these two things, then I believe they can bring in a medicare plan which will be accepted by each of the provinces in this country, and which would be an operating success, instead of continuing to be,