

Medicare

insist on their autonomy. The province of Alberta protested against the interference of the federal government in the field of medical insurance. British Columbia did the same thing. The province of Quebec also objects to the federal government interfering in the field of health.

Mr. Haidasz: Why?

Mr. Caouette: The province of Ontario—because we want precisely to preserve our freedoms and respect the autonomy of every province in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, before the federal government introduced its bill to help the provinces or suggest to them the establishment of a medicare plan, some provinces already had set up such plans within their respective boundaries.

As a matter of fact, in *La Presse* of January 22, 1965, the following item appeared:

Health insurance scheme in British Columbia.

The Social Credit government of British Columbia laid down yesterday the broad lines of a health insurance scheme for the benefit of low income groups which will be operated by private insurance companies.

This announcement constitutes the main feature of the speech from the throne read by the lieutenant governor, Mr. George Pearkes, at the opening of the 2nd session of the 27th legislature of that province.

Almost two years ago.

The plan entails an optional test of personal incomes. . .

An optional test, rather than a compulsory one, whereas the federal plan will be compulsory.

The plan implies an optional test of personal incomes and is meant to help those who are not entitled to social welfare but who, on account of their very low income are unable to pay the entire cost of medicare.

Naturally, the provincial leader of the New Democratic Party objected to that bill alleging that it was a surrender to the physicians and that the scheme could be a surrender to private insurance companies.

Mr. Speaker, has the N.D.P. in Saskatchewan made such a great success of its medicare scheme when physicians refused to co-operate with the government? Has the N.D.P. government not been compelled to respect the physician's freedom and to take into account the fact that a human being is more important than a governmental scheme, be it medical or otherwise? Has the government not been compelled to retreat and reconsider its legislation?

[Mr. Caouette.]

They did not have to, either in British Columbia or in Alberta. Why? Because they respect the freedom of the individual, the freedom of everyone, the freedom of the physician and patient, the freedom of the human person, and this is the cause to which Social Credit supporters across Canada are dedicated.

Mr. Speaker, nobody in Canada is more anxious that the members of the Ralliement Cr ditiste to see that every Canadian gets medical care when he needs it. It is unthinkable that in 1966, at this very moment, Mr. Speaker, every Canadian cannot enjoy the security of obtaining medical care when he is ill, in hospital, or in need of a doctor. It is unacceptable and inadmissible that this should exist in a wealthy country like Canada. Nobody denies the physical potentialities of Canada, but, on the other hand, everybody fears and dreads the financial potentialities, precisely because we are tackling things which should not be touched while financiers get away with exploiting Canada.

If, instead of telling us the medicare plan will be put into effect in 1968 only, the minister had said: We shall stop paying interests on the national debt in order to fight inflation. And the minister could have suggested that the provinces attend to the insurance plan and agreed to provide them with the amounts of money required to meet those expenses in their own territory; but not a plan with a yoke, one that degrades, that is a breach of individual freedom, that compels a patient to choose or take compulsorily the government's doctor, as will be the case and as is the case in certain socialist countries.

I can understand, Mr. Speaker, that medical care can be provided in socialist and communist countries, but not through doctors chosen by the individual, no, but chosen and paid by the government. That is what we will be coming to with legislation of this kind.

What have we, the Cr ditistes been asking for, ever since we have been in this house? Since 1962, we have been talking about a health dividend for each and every citizen of Canada; we are urging the government to guarantee payment of the annual premium of a group insurance policy for a married person and for a single dependent person having to earn a living.