

Medicare

Health and Welfare, and all the time the Minister of National Health and Welfare thought they were playing on the same team. So one can be sympathetic.

I think the explanation given for the postponement of the medical care program, which has been a political football of its own kind for almost 50 years in Canada, is a cruel jest upon the poor people of Canada. Medicare is described as inflationary; yet what is inflationary about providing medical services for those who are ill? If you examine the arguments you see either that it is improper to treat a person who is ill, gravely ill, because treatment costs too much, or you do not treat that person who is ill. If it is improper to treat a sick man because he is ill, and because treating him would be inflationary as it takes money to look after him, you are really equating the dollar in a strange and un-Christian way with human suffering that can be alleviated. It takes money to alleviate suffering. The thinking seems to be that above all we must protect our money, or we do not protect Canadians. I think the idea is nonsensical.

There is nothing inflationary about seeing that poor Canadians who look to society for help receive that help. I think most of us in the House of Commons would feel ashamed to think that we were a party to the sort of reasoning indulged in by the government of the day. Indeed we have two victims of this phony war on inflation. One is medical care, and the other is scientific research, which includes medical research. So shortsighted are our policies in this direction that by accepting the postponement and by accepting the very thesis of the argument made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp), which is aided and abetted by the government of which he is a member, we are condemning ourselves to being a second class nation in the intellectual and research fields for decades to come. This is what we are asked to be party to.

I have a letter from the Associate Professor of Medicine at Dalhousie University, Dr. John F. L. Woodbury, and he has given me permission to quote from it. I advance his arguments as my own, where he says:

As a medical educator I am deeply concerned with the need for training and keeping teacher scientists in our medical schools. It is most disheartening to see one's colleagues leave Canada or abandon research careers in which they have invested years of training because the climate for medical research in Canada is poor.

I interject parenthetically to say that this man knows whereof he speaks. He is associate professor of medicine. To continue:

A better climate is one of the most important considerations in increasing the number and quality of medical teachers which is, in turn, vital to produce the increased numbers of good doctors which will be demanded by a program of health insurance.

It is therefore alarming to learn that the Minister of Finance has made a statement in the House of Commons on September 8th to the effect that "While the government is strongly in favour of increasing grants for research as a basic long term policy, we will have to exercise more restraint in the rate of increase this year than we had hoped would be necessary."

That is a remark made by the Minister of Finance. I do not find any of his colleagues opposite applauding, though.

The hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) placed on record on a previous occasion—I do not think he did this in his excellent contribution to the current debate—some of the appalling statistics that have come about because we in Canada do not take any pride in being a nation which could be an intellectual or research centre of the world. Heaven only knows, we have the wealth to do it; we could afford to put money into these fields. As the hon. member for Simcoe East said before—and he confirmed my figures a few minutes ago—our medical brain drain amounts to some 200 Canadian trained doctors per year, each educated at a cost of some \$50,000 and each likely to have earned \$500,000 over an average working career of 30 years.

Putting it in another way, Mr. Speaker, what does this brain drain amount to? In positive figures it amounts to a \$10 million loss in the medical training that goes on in this country. That is the money spent on people who go elsewhere to practise their profession or carry on research.

In addition there is the loss of income tax. Income tax is one way by which the state can recover part of its contributions to the education of these doctors. Five hundred thousand dollars will yield a tremendous amount of income tax.

The third loss is the loss of the enhancement of the medical services we have in this country, so that instead of gaining we have to run like squirrels in a cage to remain where we are.

The fourth loss is the loss to our international pride and national prestige, coming from the recognition abroad of Canada's failure to cultivate an intellectual atmosphere.