

*Medicare*

along with what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said, and yet he says he speaks and mourns for all Canadians.

What about the union members? There is a large number of union members, not only in my own province but throughout the country, who have their own medical plans. Do they want to substitute a plan that would cost them twice as much? I recall asking the Prime Minister over two years ago what the plan would cost. He said, and it is on record in *Hansard*, that the cost had not yet been ascertained. The first thing that has to be determined is what the plan will cost the taxpayer and the nation. I want to make myself clear. We are all in favour of some national health scheme but today we are talking about a universal, compulsory scheme. I would think that union members would not be in favour of such a plan.

What about people covered by M.S.I. or other similar plans in other provinces? M.S.I. is the plan used in the province of Alberta, but there are many other plans which cover thousands of office workers in the Canadian commercial world. Can these people afford more taxes? Can they afford more deductions? Does the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre say he speaks for all these people? Let him go and ask them and he will receive a different answer from the one he suggested in the House of Commons.

What about the farmers? Does the hon. member speak for the farmers of western Canada where the cost of living has outstripped productivity even though this year the wheat crop has been one of the greatest in history? Can the farmer pay more taxes? Can he afford more deductions? Does the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre speak for the farmers of western Canada? Let him go and talk to those farmers. I suggest to him that when he says he speaks for all Canadians and when he blames the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp), he may be speaking for a small group of Canadians who need such a national plan, for those in need, for the disabled, the senior citizens and the blind, but we have to look at the other side of the coin. What about the people under M.S.I., the office workers? What about the farmers who have their own plan and what about the union members? What is the percentage of Canadians now covered by their own plans? I question the hon. member's statement when he says he speaks for all Canadians.

[Mr. Woolliams.]

Is the hon. member speaking for those Canadians who refuse to take their responsibility in society, such as men who have deserted their wives and families, who are then reduced to living on social welfare because, as we in this house know it is difficult to force a man to accept the responsibility of maintaining his wife and family when he deserts them? I have tried to get some figures from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to find out how many such people there are in Canada. Apparently there are from 100,000 to 200,000 such families. If the hon. member is speaking for those irresponsible people, then I might go along with him. He may speak for a group of men and women who wish to shift their responsibility to other Canadians but I suggest he is not speaking for all Canadians.

We all believe in the need for a medicare plan. I certainly believe in the need for a plan that will assist senior citizens, women, children, the neglected, the disabled and the blind, but I am not in favour of a universal, compulsory plan like the Canada Pension Plan under which both the poor and the wealthy have to pay the same amount. Can people earning \$600 a year or a little more contribute to the Canada Pension Plan? The suggestion is that they can.

Now we come to the question of how much this plan will cost. We have not heard much about that. We are told the plan will cost the taxpayers of this country \$600 million to \$800 million per year. We all know that when medicare was started in Great Britain a certain sum of money was provided for it but before the plan was implemented the cost had doubled. Should such an expensive outlay be made in Canada at a time of inflationary crisis? Should such a plan be made universal and be enforced on people whose heads are just above water, speaking figuratively? Those people living in the provinces where inflation is not in progress do not in my opinion accept the views of the economic experts of this nation and other nations.

• (3:40 p.m.)

Let us take a look at the real cost. If the 200 recommendations of the Hall report were immediately implemented, then by 1971, less than five years hence, the cost of this plan to the nation would be \$4.4 billion, which is half the Canadian budget today and the budget for 1956. I want to repeat that. The total cost of the 200 recommendations suggested by the Hall report would be \$4.4 billion by 1971 or