

*Medicare*

When he made that statement I think that the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam behaved as a politician rather than as a parliamentarian because our party never intended to move an amendment to postpone the implementation of that medicare program which is for us of such great importance.

The hon. member who spoke before me claimed that it was not necessary, in short that it was useless to secure the co-operation of the provincial governments to implement that plan.

Mr. Speaker, how can we meet one of the main requirements of that plan, that is the portability of the plan in all the provinces of Canada, if we do not have the co-operation of the provincial governments in that field?

And that is exactly the reservation I make about consideration of that bill. This bill seems to have been introduced too quickly because beforehand the co-operation of all the provinces should have been sought so that plan would meet all the conditions already approved by parliament, first at the resolution stage and then when the bill was introduced by the minister himself.

Through our amendment we also want this legislation to recognize the principle of free choice by the individual. If I am not mistaken, that legislation is not necessarily a socialist legislation, but it has socialist tendencies, and I have the impression that, when it comes to public health or illness, people must be in a position to decide for themselves about the medicare program which they want. That is the aim of the second paragraph of our amendment.

In the third paragraph of the amendment we read:

—the necessary steps to insure that there be adequate medical research and that doctors and other medical personnel be trained in sufficient number.

Mr. Speaker, surely, it is not necessary to make long speeches to prove that there is a shortage of doctors everywhere in Canada. Indeed, the authorities of a small parish in my district, with a population of 3,000 have been trying to no avail, for two years, to get a doctor. They have been unable to find one to minister even to the pressing needs of the population. It is obvious that implementing the plan without first being sure of having the necessary doctors, nurses, laboratories and research centres on which its proper operation depends, would defeat the purposes of the bill. The obvious purpose of the third part of our amendment is to make sure that

the bill will provide for enough doctors, personnel, experts to enable proper implementation of the medicare plan we now have before the house.

The fourth part of the amendment reads as follows:

That it provide the pressing medical services to those persons who for financial reasons are unable to attend to them personally.

Obviously, when the government decided to postpone implementation of the plan to 1968, it became urgent for the needy to receive without delay the required medical services. Unfortunately, we still have too great a number of people who, for lack of financial resources, cannot receive adequate medical attention. The fourth paragraph of our amendment is precisely intended to provide, immediately, such special care to the needy.

● (4:50 p.m.)

I say to the leader of the New Democratic Party that instead of postponing implementation of medicare, the purpose of our amendment is to improve the present legislation and to make it available to all the citizens.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I return to the conditions mentioned by the minister, to make this act applicable.

The conditions outlined by the minister are as follows: first, the plan must be administered by the government or a non-profit agency; second, it must be universal, that is, it must be applicable to everyone; third, it must be portable; and fourth, it must cover all medical costs.

The central government intends to participate in the provincial medicare only under these conditions, by paying 50 per cent of the cost of medicare. Now, Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the four conditions mentioned by the minister during the introduction of this bill are not agreeable to all the provinces; four provinces have objected to the application of those four conditions and have suggested that they would be willing to set up their own medicare plan. Of course, we know that Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec have already made known their intention to have their own medicare plan. Indeed, in the case of one province, this is for technical reasons; for others, it is to maintain a principle to which they hold firmly. As far as the province of Quebec is concerned, we think that this is a field of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

From 1917 to 1957, the central government tried to interfere in the field of health, of