

Medicare

his party as being far left. May I point out to him that the attitude of the N.D.P. in this debate has indicated it feels indeed left: It is left out of the implementation of this legislation, and it seems to be suggesting that it will not be satisfied to have this government obtain any credit for something which has been undertaken against a great deal of opposition, and now apparently under the threat of a filibuster from the N.D.P.

Mr. Knowles: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Stanbury: He used a most tortuous argument to show that the credit for this legislation which he says his party supports should not under any circumstances go to the government. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a supporter of a government that has not just talked about this measure, as Liberal and other governments have done for many years, but a government which will now put it on the statute books of Canada.

It is a disappointment to me that we may not have this legislation implemented for another year, but I am glad that this government is committing itself now to making health services equally available to all Canadians. That is why I oppose the amendment, which is simply a means of killing this bill, and I ask hon. members including those across the floor who claim to support the principle of medicare to support this bill as the government will amend it during the committee stage.

Mr. Knowles: Will the hon. member permit a question before he sits down?

Mr. Stanbury: I rather hesitate to accept a question from a person of such great wit and prominence, but I will try to answer it.

An hon. Member: Don't overestimate him.

Mr. Knowles: It is a simple question. Is the hon. member prepared to vote for the government bill in its present form, as we are?

Mr. Stanbury: Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to vote for the bill in its present form, if it is supported and proposed in that form by the government which I support.

I think that even the hon. member would prefer to have the government which I support than a government led by any other hon. member in this house.

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) in his very able presentation to the house, outlined the almost unbelievable program of preparation which will be needed to enable medicare to operate in an effective way in the future. He also outlined the shocking lack of preparation which is being undertaken by this government to bring in a realistic program of medicare of which the Canadian people can be proud. I am convinced that the great majority of Canadians believe in the principle of medicare and are anxious to see a workable plan introduced in the very near future. I know that I most certainly am. However, it has become apparent that if a crash program for training additional doctors, dentists, nurses and technicians, whom we are going to need to enable the plan to work, is not undertaken in the near future, then the plan will be a bitter disappointment to the Canadian people, who have been led to believe that medicare will be of such great benefit to the general health of the people of this country.

When the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) spoke in this house some weeks ago to explain why the medicare program was to be delayed in its inception for one year, he gave as his reason for the postponement that the measure would increase inflationary pressures which are so seriously affecting the country.

● (8:40 p.m.)

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know that these expenditures will not commence for another nine months. At that time such expenditures will be mostly a transfer from the private to the public sector. This country is engaged right now, not nine months from now, in a very important battle against the inflationary pressures which this government has allowed to grow during the past year or so. It is simply not in accordance with the facts to give as an excuse for the delay of this important medicare program, the fact that it will affect inflationary pressures today.

This medicare program is being delayed for two reasons, which have nothing to do with expenditures or inflation. The first of these reasons is that the provinces representing 85 per cent of the population of this country have refused to go along with the present plan. It is abundantly clear that no national plan could operate successfully if only 15 per cent of the people are included in it.