

Medicare

I agree fully with the content of that editorial. I do not think anyone who has any responsibility for dealing with people or who is aware of the problems facing Canada today, especially in the field of social welfare, can feel anything but concern about what will happen to the medical profession if this bill is put into effect in its present form. Certainly, to the extent that the doctor-patient relationship is concerned, if there is a voluntary aspect to the plan there will be less chance of difficulties developing and less chance of losing our doctors to the United States.

As I was saying, there has been a great battle going on within the Liberal party. It has not ended. It is a running battle and one finds difficulty in determining who is winning from day to day in the skirmishes taking place within the Liberal party. One thing seems certain: It is the taxpayers of this nation who will be the eventual losers. I say this because the program finally recommended will not be the best program available; it will be the program which the two battle-scarred groups in the Liberal party find they can best live with. And it will be put into effect not at the most appropriate time, having regard to action taken in the various provinces, but rather at the time when it would be most convenient for the warring factions.

The Prime Minister might help solve this problem by resigning. We would then learn the name of his successor; we would learn whether the right wing of the party represented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) or the left wing represented by any one of a number of leadership aspirants will be dictating policy in the future. When all this had been settled we might then get around to thinking about the people who will pay the bill and who are anxious to have a medical care plan, but who must await the end of the internal wrangling in the Liberal party before they can get what they want.

During these blow-ups the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) has been found in various positions. One day he is resigning. The next day he is staying. The next day he is going to have altered the determination of the Minister of Finance not to have the plan in effect before July 1, 1968. The next day the Minister of Finance is maintaining that date. The next day he is not sure. Yet through it all members of parliament are told they should legislate to make the bill an act, and then, along with the Canadian public, wait for whatever

decision might be forthcoming from a government which really does not know from day to day which way it is going.

How much better it would be to allow this legislation to await evidence of some agreement among the provinces on a program which could be universal in application. In the meantime this house could take action to deal with various matters which threaten the livelihood of Canadians today. Surely, the point has been reached at which we must attack the ever increasing cost of living. Surely we must devise labour legislation which would eliminate the tying up of our national economy as the rail strike threatened to do, and as the postal strike threatens to do if it is allowed to take place. Surely the time to provide increases for the old age pensioners and the war veterans of this nation is already overdue. If parliament has a bad image today, as it surely does in the eyes of many, it is because this government has been incapable of governing and because it shows no greater ability today to provide the kind of direction for which our people are crying than it did when it took office in April, 1963.

I will support the amendment in question because it recognizes aspects of welfare legislation that I consider worthy of consideration. It respects the freedom of the individual. It recognizes the immediate need of many in our nation today for medical services that they are incapable of securing. It recognizes the need for a crash program to provide the professional people required when such a program becomes effective; and it recognizes, above everything, the fact that we as federal members of parliament are interfering in a matter of provincial jurisdiction and should only do this with the full co-operation and consent of the provincial governments.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, Bill No. C-227 is one of the most important pieces of legislation to come before this parliament. Some Liberal members have taken exception to the length of time which has been used up in this debate. I would point out that in dealing with this legislation parliament is laying the pattern for the kind of health insurance which will obtain in this country for the next half century. It therefore seems extremely important that we examine it carefully and that we do everything we can to improve it.

As the house knows, the members of this party support the principles contained in the legislation. I shall have something to say later about some of the changes we would like to