

Medicare

would have been far better had nature provided a second set of teeth at 50 years of age. But we cannot argue with nature.

As the previous speaker said and as has been pointed out, when medicare does come into force it is important that it comes into force forever. It is far more important that this legislation be passed by this house than that it shall come into effect on July 1, 1967 or July 1, 1968. The important thing is that it does become part of the legislation of this country. I would suspect that no party would be more disappointed than the New Democratic Party if in fact this program does come into force on July 1, 1967.

Mr. Scott (Danforth): Explain.

Mr. Klein: Very obviously, Mr. Speaker, for political reasons. They would be very happy if the plan did not come into force prior to July 1, 1968. They would be most unhappy if it did come into force before that date.

Mr. Lewis: You are as wrong as your finance minister.

Mr. Klein: It has been stated, that there is a shortage in this country of medical practitioners. I should like to deal with this point for a moment and to speak about the high cost of providing education, both in time and in money, to train the medical students of this country.

For example, I am told that in the province of Quebec the requirement for entry into the career of medicine is a pre-medical course of some four years duration, at the end of which a degree either of Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science is necessary. Once this degree has been obtained and the qualifications are met for entering medical school, the medical student has to spend another four years at medical school. In addition, he must then spend another year as an intern in a hospital. This means that a student who wants to become a general practitioner—the requirements are different for someone who wants to specialize in medicine—has to train for nine years.

Beyond this, Mr. Speaker, if the student wishes to specialize in any particular branch of medicine I am told that he must intern in a hospital in the province of Quebec for a further period of five years. Therefore this means that if a student wants to practise as a pediatrician or as a surgeon, or to train for a particular specialty, he must give up 14 years of his life after leaving high school.

This would mean, that if a student of 17 or 18 enters the liberal arts to obtain a B.A. degree or a Bachelor of Science degree and wants to specialize in a particular branch of medicine, he will not be able to earn his own living in his particular specialty until he is at least 32 or 33 years of age. I am also told that the approximate cost of educating a doctor is \$25,000 a year.

I would think that the conditions which are laid down for people who want to choose medicine as a career must be looked into with a view to reducing the period of time it takes to become a doctor or a specialist, as they desire. We should also use whatever influence we can to convince the medical association of this because the association itself is contributing to a shortage of doctors. The medical profession itself is creating a shortage of medical practitioners in this way.

I do not see the necessity for a person who wants to become a doctor to apply himself to a four-year pre-medical course to obtain a B.A. or Bachelor of Science degree. I think there ought to be a crash program in which the pre-medical requirements should be done away with until such time as we have sufficient doctors in this country and under which a person could enter upon medical training immediately on graduation from high school. If more time is required for training, I suggest that a student's time would be far better spent in the actual study of medicine than in the study of Keates or Shakespeare.

• (5:20 p.m.)

I believe we are coming to the time when we all want to see universal free college education or the opportunity of a free college education for all people in Canada. We are probably heading in that direction. I think we ought to establish priorities and not wait for a universal plan. For example, we cannot offer opportunities for free university education for every person in Canada in every type of profession. But in this country we are short of doctors and therefore we ought to say that we will provide free education to anyone qualified who wishes to take up the profession of medicine. Such a program for such a purpose ought to be established immediately.

An hon. Member: Too late.

Mr. Klein: We must persuade the medical profession to co-operate. I may be wrong in what I am about to say, and perhaps this is not so today, but in the past different associations, whether medical, legal or others, set up standards in order to prevent their