

Medicare

The first time I ever heard the former minister of national health and welfare, who is now Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) I heard him recite in heady pride the acceptance of that pledge as a mandate, should they be re-elected. It must have been another of those disappointments with which the Liberal party has favoured him, to be denied the privilege to affix his name to such a bill. On this occasion I ask him to take new heart. After this bill before us has passed, fortune may still smile his way, and provide the opportunity to fulfil the pledge that has been made to successive Liberal generations.

The province of Saskatchewan is a jewel set in the heart of the prairies. Half a century ago it was discovered by the late Sir Clifford Sifton. To the raw unbroken prairie of those days he drew the pioneers by the thousands, and in the process changed the face and outlook of Canada. He was a nation builder—

Mr. Cowan: He was a Liberal too.

Mr. Nasserden: Yes, but he was a different type of Liberal from what we have in Canada today.

Mr. Cashin: And you are a different type of Tory, too.

Mr. Nasserden: He was a nation builder, to be compared with those who went before him, like Sir John A. Macdonald who laid the steel to unite Canada from coast to coast. Sir John A. Macdonald gave Canada the physical outlines of a nation, and gave it the spirit that would make it distinctive among the nations of the world.

Sir Clifford Sifton gave our nation a new dimension, bringing in thousands to build their own homes and to grow the golden grain that, even to our day half a century later, has been the mainstay of our economy and of our exports. The turning of the sod, the recurring battle with the elements, and natural calamities have left their mark on the people of the prairies. These people came to know instinctively that there were certain things that could only be accomplished by working together.

That never dulled their appetite for freedom and initiative. Earlier in our history, by trial and experiment, municipal health plans of varying scope were put into operation, many of them long before the C.C.F. was ever heard of in Canada. The farm organizations in our province were a motivating force in providing an educational background for

the development of these programs. The doctor-patient relationship was protected by those who had a real health care program at heart.

By 1944 all of the political parties in the province of Saskatchewan were committed to a hospitalization program. The revenues in the years that followed were allocated to provide for the introduction of Saskatchewan's hospitalization plan. The search for a national health plan was still in the minds of Saskatchewan people when, in 1958, they rallied to the banner of John Diefenbaker and sent to the House of Commons 16 Progressive Conservative members of the 17 members from that province. In the ensuing elections the results at the polls in western Canada have almost become a legend.

Thus it was that the Hall Commission on Health Services became a reality. Thus it was that the first substantial move was made by a federal government toward implementation of the old Liberal pledge. No one will ever forget the manoeuvring that ensued following that initial stance taken here in the House of Commons, with the members of all political parties trying to lay claim to paternity even before a national health plan was born.

I say to the leader of the N.D.P. that it ill becomes a man who once was the premier of Saskatchewan, the leader of the old C.C.F. party in that province, to impute motives to those who were sent from Saskatchewan to ensure a full study of health matters and the report which has formed the basis of the plan that is now under consideration.

Mr. Winch: Then why are you blocking it?

Mr. Nasserden: During the course of my remarks I have acknowledged the role of Sir John A. Macdonald and the role of Sir Clifford Sifton, and the part they played in opening up western Canada, thus developing a new dimension in our national life. In a real way they gave this nation a distinctive character and purpose. In recent years another great Canadian, with the imprint of the prairies on every one of his features, has given this nation heart and spirit.

Historians have already paid tribute to his qualities as an opposition critic, and as I read the book that was written about him by Peter Newman I saw him as the greatest liberal of them all. That is the real story of his achievements which gave this nation heart and spirit during the seven most tumultuous years of decision ever experienced in Canada, a period