

*Medicare*

a little footnote of my own and entitle this editorial "The psychics and their indecision". Because the government through their action are qualifying themselves to become psychics, to be seers into the future.

The article begins:

The curious noise heard across the land last week end was that of Liberals purring in satisfaction that they had been so courageous and wise as to postpone medicare for a year, from July 1, 1967 to July 1, 1968.

We must put the country's welfare first, said Mr. Pearson proudly, and so said they all, all proudly.

Is not the medical health of the nation the most important welfare consideration in the country? The article continues:

The *Journal* believes it was wise to postpone medicare. But what are we to make now of the Liberals' all-out pledge to bring in medicare July 1, 1968?

They seem to be saying this:

"We can't give you medicare now; with inflation and our general financial position as it is it might be fatal to the national interest. But we will give it to you without fail not later than July 1, 1968".

Presumably on that magic date—

—and this is why I call the members of the government psychics—

—no matter whether inflation is worse or trade has gone to pot—come hell or high water medicare will be given us July 1, 1968, the national interest be hanged.

This is pitiful policy, reckless promising.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but I will just quote the last paragraph of this very sound editorial.

It is annoying to the average Canadian to have his leaders speak to him as though he were a nincompoop. This unnecessary promise must also be annoying to the provinces which are by no means in agreement with the government's medicare scheme even now and who in a year and a half could be still less in agreement.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you would agree with me about the folly of passing a bill at this stage which will not come into effect until July of 1968. Many of my colleagues have risen to support the amendment that has been so ably presented by the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard). We have heard the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) boasting of the brevity of his bill—only nine clauses, he said. As a medicare measure dealing with the health of 20 million people inhabiting an area of 3½ million square miles, the bill certainly does not qualify in that regard.

Bill No. C-227 is simply a financial measure. It refers to such terms as "the insured person", "contributions", "the calculation of

contributions", "advances" and "payments". The reason that the bill clings to this narrow language is that medicare is not a federal responsibility. In other words, the federal government cannot compose and put before this house a bill containing numerous clauses dealing with medicare because the entire responsibility for medicare lies with the provinces. All legislation regarding the health and welfare of the people comes within the power of the provinces. Yet this government—and this is typical of their legislation in the past as well—tries to impose Bill No. C-227 upon all the provinces of Canada. I say that this will not work.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare has my political sympathy in that again he has been frustrated by the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) and by the upper echelons of the cabinet. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) has spoken. Medically speaking, he has assumed the role of the great witchdoctor of the Liberal party and of the cabinet. He has even put on the record implausible excuses for postponing that for which the people of Canada were hoping. He uses the unsound excuse that medicare will contribute to inflationary tendencies.

Why did the Liberals not say this when they were advocating medicare one year ago? If the Minister of Finance knew that medicare and inflation are directly related, he should have made allowances for this not only in the election promises of the Liberals last November but also in the legislative program that now ensues, or that the Liberals are contending ensues. The excuse of the Minister of Finance is simply poppycock. The people of Canada, provincially, collectively, geographically and individually are too intelligent to have this poked down their throats, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister, the members of the cabinet and the government have painted themselves into a corner. In their election promises the Liberals promised that priority would be given to medicare. Why, then, did they not give priority to medicare in their legislative program? This is nothing but a grand deception, Mr. Speaker, to delay the adoption of medicare on the ground that it is inflationary. The Liberal party cannot be depended upon any more, as far as the electors are concerned. That statement was made by one of their respected delegates to their recent convention held in this city.

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]