

Medicare

whether the C.M.A. does speak for the whole profession when it makes these pronouncements.

In this debate we have heard a great deal about the year 1919, the year in which health insurance became a plank in the Liberal platform. The Liberal health insurance plank was born in the same year as I was. The baby born in 1919 is now getting on a little bit, has grey hairs and recently had to obtain some glasses. All the signs of physical deterioration which come about in the mid-forties are beginning to appear. In fact, I will be well over the hill, if this government is going to stay in power, before medical insurance is ever brought in in Canada. However, we can always live in hope.

An hon. Member: You won't live that long.

Mr. Prittie: Somebody says I will never live that long, Mr. Speaker, and that may be true.

There are two or three other members from whom I should like to hear before this debate is concluded, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) should speak on a matter of this importance. The subject should commend itself to him, but particularly he should take the responsibility for helping to explain why this postponement in the implementation of the bill is being made.

I also think we should hear from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) because he is the man who has told us that there are economic reasons why medical care insurance should be postponed until 1968. However, I do not accept what he has said about this because he has not explained his reasons in very much detail. Some members of his own party do not accept what he has said. I heard the hon. member for Hamilton East (Mr. Munro) on television last night and he did not seem to accept it. So I think the Minister of Finance owes us an explanation in detail, with figures to back him up, as to why medical care insurance cannot be introduced into this country at the present time for economic reasons. If he does not do this during the debate on second reading, he should give us a thorough explanation of this point during the committee stage.

Mr. Orlikow: If he does not, it will not pass.

Mr. Prittie: There is, Mr. Speaker, another member of the house from whom I should like to hear on this subject, and this is the

[Mr. Prittie.]

Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker). It was while he was prime minister that Mr. Justice Hall and the other commissioners were appointed to make this study. When the Hall Commission report came out he praised it fulsomely. Therefore I should like to know whether the Leader of the Opposition is in full accord with the items in the amendment which has been proposed by the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard), because it seems to me that at least two of those items do not square with the recommendations of the Hall Commission.

I think that on a subject of this importance we should hear not only from the Prime Minister but also from the Leader of the Opposition. He is usually quite willing to give us his views on any number of subjects, and I think we should hear from him on this particular subject too, because it does seem to be in line with what he has said in the past.

The Canadian people, Mr. Speaker, have been waiting a very long time for the implementation of the type of program that is in effect in practically all other western developed countries. There is no reason why we should have to wait any longer. We are told by the government that we must wait another year, but many of us will not be satisfied to let this debate come to a close either on second reading or in committee until the Minister of Finance has appeared and given the type of explanation we are entitled to have for the delay he is responsible for imposing upon us.

• (9:00 p.m.)

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I think I can have some sympathy for the Minister of National Health and Welfare and for his charming parliamentary secretary. As a fellow maritimer I do feel sympathy, because they fully anticipated that this season of the year would bring their moment of triumph. But, after the handling they have received from the Minister of Finance, the Minister of National Health and Welfare and his parliamentary secretary look as if they could stand some medicare themselves.

The minister sat around the Chateau Laurier in the company of misguided Canadians, who had nothing to do a few days ago, waiting for an opportunity to go front and centre, grab the football and seize the limelight, only to have it snatched away from him by the Minister of Finance. Even worse than that the Minister of Finance scored the touchdown against the Minister of National