

*Medicare*

of bringing into effect the recommendations for the implementation of a health charter for Canadians. This has all been reviewed in detail by the distinguished commissioners, headed by the then Chief Justice Hall. It seems to me we are not now talking about a bold, new experiment but about action required before Canada's 100th birthday to catch up with other countries in meeting a vital social responsibility.

All these general conclusions have been reinforced powerfully in my mind by contact with my own constituents in Greenwood since I have been their representative in parliament. I have made no scientific or detailed survey of need but I have run into case after case—no doubt this has been the experience of others in this chamber—where the absence of such a plan has caused personal tragedy. I have met people whose life savings have melted away because of tremendous unanticipated expenses occasioned by illness.

I know people who, because of the illness of some member of their family, have had to "moonlight" and work 15 or 16 hours a day to make enough money to pay their bills. We all know something of the anxiety which is inevitably caused by illness. This anxiety is tremendously increased by financial worry. To the extent that we implement this bill we shall be lifting a great burden of care from the shoulders of the people of Canada.

• (4:20 p.m.)

I deeply regret that the government has seen fit to postpone the date on which its offer to the provinces to implement the legislation was to become effective, because I believe that this delay will strike at public confidence, if any remains, in the good faith of political parties. I believe that the postponement was totally unnecessary. The excuses for the delay are without substance and every possible pressure ought to be put on the government to reconsider its decision.

The decision seems to me, Mr. Speaker, not to be based on any economic necessity caused by inflation but to be caused by effective lobbies and a lack of conviction on the part of some of those dominant in the present government. The sad part of the postponement is that it may not just be a postponement, because it encourages all those opposed to this basic and beneficial plan to concentrate their fire on further whittling away and watering down the plan during the postponement period.

It encourages every provincial government that seeks to alter the plan to bring in a partial and inadequate plan and to get such a plan established and occupying the field. Therefore the decision postpones the effective date not just for one year but very probably for a good deal longer, and no amount of lip service to the desirability of bringing this plan into effect as soon as possible will be able to eradicate the conviction many people will feel that they have been betrayed by this postponement decision.

I was afraid, Mr. Speaker, that I might take a slightly partisan view on this matter, so in my remarks I have confined myself to quotations from a well known Liberal newspaper, the *Toronto Star*, which certainly used to be favourable to the Liberal party, and I want to review briefly the recent history of this question of the bringing into effect of medicare.

On March 6, 1965, Mr. Peter Newman, whose means of knowledge of what goes on within the cabinet are unknown to me, wrote a very prophetic article. He wrote that massive pressure was building up within the Liberal party for a general election in June with medicare as the central issue of the campaign. He added that there was a strong lobby inside the cabinet opposed to the idea. I do not know whether he meant opposed to the idea of medicare or to the idea of an election. This plan to hold an early election on the central issue of medicare was, he said, based upon the view that a strong Liberal stand for medicare would cut the policy ground from under the N.D.P. in the campaign and presumably garner a great many Progressive votes.

On May 27, 1965, the *Toronto Star* reported the hon. member for Hamilton East (Mr. Munro), who was then parliamentary secretary to the previous minister of national health and welfare, as saying:

The Pearson government is bracing itself to fulfil its election promise of a comprehensive medical insurance plan within the life of the present parliament.

It appears recently to have become unbraced, Mr. Speaker.

On June 15, 1965, the *Star* revealed that after six months of study 24 Liberal caucus members had issued a unanimous report in a three page document—and I ask the house to note these words—which urged an immediate start on a national medicare program. In June of 1965 the Prime Minister announced