

Medicare

the medical service plan commonly known as OMSIP, a single person pays \$60, a married person \$120 and a married person with children \$150. If we add up the cost of hospitalization and medical insurance for a single person in Ontario we find it amounts to a total of \$117. A married person with no children pays \$198 and a married person with children pays a total of \$228.

If we compare this with the rates in Saskatchewan, \$72 for a married couple and \$36 for a single person, we can well appreciate why so many people in Ontario are anxious to have this federal medical care insurance plan implemented immediately. It would mean that the people of Ontario would find their premiums cut by 50 per cent at least, with consequent relief from some of the financial pressure caused by the high cost of living.

We in the New Democratic Party were hoping that the legislation would be opened so that the provinces would have an opportunity to include among their services dental care, optometric care, chiropractic care and any other necessary services which would advance the health and well-being of the people. We feel that the government should make such changes in this legislation as are necessary to provide for the inclusion of these services as they become available in the provinces.

Many Liberal speakers, especially those on the back benches, have underlined their faith in the principle of medicare during the course of this debate and have expressed their regret that the government does not intend to make the legislation effective on July 1, 1967. They have full right to do so. But their speeches are indicative of the disregard which members of the cabinet, particularly the Minister of Finance, have for their views.

• (6:50 p.m.)

Some backbenchers have indicated in their speeches that we in the New Democratic Party are filibustering and holding up an increase in pensions to senior citizens. This is not so, Mr. Speaker. According to the government the medicare legislation will not come into effect until July 1, 1968, so time is not of the essence, even according to the government itself. With respect to blocking any pension increase for our senior citizens, legislation to provide for that could have been introduced at the commencement of the session when the opposition parties moved an amendment and subamendment to increase

[Mr. Gilbert.]

old age pensions to \$100 a month at age 65. But this the government rejected. At no time have opposition members raised any blocks with regard to legislation that could be introduced to take care of our senior citizens. Therefore the fault lies not with the opposition but fully with the government.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare would be helping many Canadians, more especially those Canadians who are not covered and those who have restricted and inadequate coverage, if he were to make the effective date July 1, 1967. He would also establish his position as a Liberal leadership candidate by showing members of the house his determination to lead in something that he has believed in, something he has fought hard for, and something he has now been pushed back on. We in the N.D.P. will give full support to the bill on the basis of the legislation being implemented on July 1, 1967.

Mr. L. M. Brand (Saskatoon): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended originally to become enmeshed in this debate but some of the remarks I have heard from my left and from the government side of the house require that I should try to straighten out the thinking of those hon. members to a slight degree, if this is possible.

I must say, in view of the statement made by the house leader about the urgency of this debate, that I as a new parliamentarian found it rather strange that he and most of his colleagues immediately left the house, leaving only one member of the cabinet in the chamber. Apparently the urgency does not extend as much to the government as it does to the other side of the house.

Since I come from Saskatchewan—I believe I am the first from that province to speak in this debate—my views will naturally be coloured to a certain extent. We do have comprehensive prepaid medicare as you, Mr. Speaker, have heard from some hon. members. All is not sweetness and light as they, of course, would have you believe, but it is a plan that is working, a plan which no one in our province would ever change except to improve it. It is a plan with which the majority of the doctors are now quite satisfied, and most certainly the patients are satisfied.

My hon. friends in the N.D.P. are so fond of taking credit for implementing this scheme, but I would point out to them that it took 23 days of withdrawal of service and numerous arguments, negotiations and so on