

Medicare

the leadership of the Liberal party. This is ridiculous I think, and I do not subscribe to it; but I have not heard the Minister of National Health and Welfare take occasion to deny this story, for the simple reason that he must be getting much favourable publicity from it. I say this because as recently as Saturday of last week, in the *Halifax Herald* there appeared this blazing headline: "Mac Wins Medicare...".

An hon. Member: Oh, yes?

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): "Mac" I presume is the Minister of National Health and Welfare. When he comes before the house on another occasion I hope that he will be able to win another battle of equal importance to the welfare of the Cape Breton miners. I hope he will make sure that another very important promise will not be broken. I do not think I need interpret that any more clearly for the minister to be able to understand what I am talking about. This article in the *Halifax Herald* goes on to explain how "Mac" won the medicare battle:

• (9:20 p.m.)

When Health Minister Allan MacEachen finally brought the revised scheme for medicare before the Commons this week, the one seat on the front benches noticeably vacant was that of Finance Minister Sharp.

And I would remind him he is battling on that other promise with that same minister. The article goes on:

Mr. Sharp had good reason for his absence. He had gone to Montreal to fill a luncheon speaking engagement but many in the Liberal benches regarded it as a trip on which he would be licking the wounds of the first real defeat of his political career—even though his aides had been able to project the idea here in recent days that the latest revision in government plans for medicare was a major victory for him.

There is the odd person who can claim victory out of broken promises, but how anybody with a reasonable approach or a common sense approach can consider a broken promise to be a victory is beyond me. I leave it to you, Mr. Speaker: It could only happen on that side of the house among the Grits.

In the tense rounds of cabinet infighting over the postponement of medicare's implementation from July 1, 1967 to July 1, 1968 the chief adversaries were Sharp and MacEachen.

The former took the stand that it was necessary in order to cool the fires of inflation and prevent a stiff increase in taxation.

It is interesting to note that they come along at Liberal conventions where they pass

resolutions referred to by the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) as "only resolutions passed by political parties" and leave the impression across this country that if things improve medicare will be implemented no later than July 1, 1968.

Is this not a ridiculous situation—a situation nobody else but those on the Liberal benches could bring about? We have a Minister of Finance who says medicare has been postponed to kill the fires of inflation. Then we have a Liberal convention and Liberal ministers going before the people of Canada and saying: If things improve, we can have the scheme. What needs to be improved? The economy of the country, they say. Now the medicare program has been postponed because of the economic condition of the country—it has been done in order to slow down the fires of inflation as the Minister of Finance says—to slow down the boom. How are we going to improve on a boom? What improvements will take place to allow the Minister of Finance to permit medicare to come into operation not later than July 1, 1968? How in the name of heaven can any Liberal reconcile these two things, which are by their nature directly opposed—on one hand, "slow down the boom," and on the other, "if things improve we can put medicare into effect"?

The Minister of Finance took the stand that it was necessary to slow down the inflationary trend. However, the Minister of Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) could not accept this and he is reported to have made his views plainly and vigorously known. The report in the *Chronicle-Herald* goes on to say this was because—

—medicare would not come into operation until half way through 1967, and because only some of the provinces would be ready to participate, the federal cost in the first fiscal year would run to no more than \$40 millions.

I would remind hon. members that the Minister of Finance, in a defiant and arrogant manner in this house the other day when questioned about the \$7 million which will be spent on the B and B Commission said it was all right to spend such a large amount in that way, though he would say nothing in favour of medicare which would cost only \$40 million in the first year.

Of course, the \$40 million needed could easily be provided if this government would look closely at some of the programs it has initiated this year. There is the \$7 million for the B and B Commission; there is the \$10