

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Third Session — Fourteenth Legislature
34th Day

Wednesday, April 11, 1962.

The Assembly met at 10:00 o'clock a.m.

On the Orders of the Day

QUESTION: RETURN

Mr. Franklin E. Foley (Turtleford): — Mr. Speaker, before the orders of the day are called, I would like to ask the government when I may expect the reply to Return No. 68 which was ordered on March 28th last?

Premier Lloyd: — I will check, Mr. Speaker, and see how the answers are progressing, and obviously table it as soon as it is available.

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS: MR. H. WARD

Mr. J.W. Gardiner (Melville): — Mr. Speaker, before the orders of the day, I would like to bring to the attention of the members of this House an event which took place in my constituency yesterday, which I think is of great importance to the province as a whole, and that was the hundredth birthday of Mr. Herb Ward, who was a resident of my own district, and is now a resident in the hamlet of Lorlie in my constituency. Mr. Ward was born April 10, 1862 at Eglinton, Ontario, and came to the Pheasant Forks area just north of the present town of Lemberg in 1883. He was married to Edith Todd in 1888 and they raised seven children. He has 37 grandchildren, 83 great-grandchildren, and seven great-great-grandchildren at the present time. He farmed from 1883 to 1944 in the Lemberg district and of course homesteaded in that area, and the statement that was given by his family was that at the time he started the homestead there, as many other homesteaders did, there was no water or wood in the location he settled on and there was not even enough water for the bull that he had, and he had to haul water for that purpose. He was a settler finally in the Chickney area which is just to the south and the west of the present town of Lemberg. I am quite certain that all members would want to join with me

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in extending to Mr. Ward our best wishes on his reaching a milestone in life which probably very few of us will ever have the opportunity to reach. He was a great pioneer and a great man in the area I represent.

QUESTION: MEDICAL CARE

Mr. Ross A. McCarthy (Cannington): — Mr. Speaker, before the orders of the day are proceeded with I would like to call to the attention of the House an incident that happened this morning at breakfast time. A young couple from one of my towns came over to see me and they told me their doctor was leaving. They were quite perturbed about it. Now, that is four doctors that I know who are definitely leaving this province. I bring it up at this time to ask the people who are negotiating with the doctors — would they be a little more lenient and try to do something to stop the exodus of our doctors.

Premier Lloyd: — Is the member directing a question or a comment? It is true of course that every year, for a great many years, doctors have left the province of Saskatchewan and other doctors have come in for a variety of purposes. We will do our best to arrange for the doctors a policy according to those which will most adequately meet the needs of the people of the province so far as medical services are concerned.

Mr. Douglas T. McFarlane (Qu'Appelle-Wolseley): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Health. Has any action been taken at the present time to try and entice doctors to come into the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Davies: — Mr. Speaker, I think that at all times, so far as our department is concerned, we have our advertisements in the recognized journals, acquainting them with positions in the Department of Public Health that may be open at the time. I think generally speaking all the persons in the department, the professional personnel who have to do with this kind of activity are doing the same thing.

The Assembly according to Order, resolved itself into the Committee of Supply.

Progress was reported and the Committee given leave to sit again later this day.

By unanimous consent, the Assembly reverted to Orders of the Day.

STATEMENT: MEDICAL CARE

Premier Lloyd: — Mr. Speaker, I have asked for this consideration of the House in order to make a statement on a topic which I know is uppermost in the minds of a great many people, not only the members of the legislature, but members of the public generally. The statement, I admit, is somewhat more lengthy than is ordinarily undertaken at a time like this, yet because of the importance of it, I hope that the House will bear with me while I am making it. I will table copies of the statement after I have read it, and make copies available to the Leader of the Opposition. Obviously copies will be distributed to the press as well.

Members of the legislature will recall that the College of Physicians and Surgeons, after having been invited to meet the government on December 4th, met the government on March 28th and April 1st, and again today, as announced yesterday.

Previously they had stated their point of view on medical care by means of two briefs to the Advisory Planning Committee on Medical Care under the chairmanship of Dr. W.P. Thompson. This committee consisted of twelve persons, six of whom were medical doctors. They studied the question of medical care for sixteen months. They received and considered briefs from 49 groups and organizations. They examined medical care plans in seven foreign countries. Last fall the committee, excluding the three representatives of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the representative of the Chamber of Commerce, recommended a plan on which the Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act is based.

It was a sincere attempt to reconcile existing differences of opinion that the recent meetings have been held. These meetings have been free and friendly but the desire reconciliation has not been achieved. Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize what I consider to be the sincerity of groups on both sides, and I hope this is accepted, and the free and friendly nature of the discussions.

The government proposed an appeal procedure to resolve differences. We offered to arrange payment procedures other than from the commission to physicians. We indicated a desire to move to maximum regional administration as soon as possible.

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The proposal made by the representatives of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in our opinion would have placed the government in the position of the tax collector with the proceeds of the taxes being used essentially to subsidize medical plans, including non-profit and possibly commercial plans. We, the government, would be granted the right to perform a financial audit of the plans and to register such plans on somewhat the basis of business conditions such as might apply to a joint stock company. The voluntary plans would be left to determine vital matters as premium levels, coinsurance charges and extra billing. The citizen would buy from a plan without any right to really determine benefits or level of costs.

We cannot believe that this would be acceptable to the people of Saskatchewan either as taxpayers or as recipients of medical services. Indeed, in our opinion, it would be a less satisfactory position than that enjoyed by many people now covered by the Swift Current Health Plan, many municipal plans and even some voluntary plans.

Nor do we feel that a government could properly discharge its responsibility within such an arrangement. Administrative costs would be high. A medical means test would be necessary. There would be no opportunity of integrating medical care with preventive and hospital care.

The government appreciates the fact that the representatives of the College of Physicians and Surgeons may not be willing — and indeed may not be free — to indicate acceptance of the proposal of the advisory committee and the government as contained in the act passed by the legislature in November, 1961. We sincerely believe that this does not stand in the way of individual members of the profession accepting, for their service, payment made available through the Medical Care Insurance Commission.

As a result I have this afternoon made the following statement to the representatives of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I should like to read the statement I made to them just a few minutes ago.

It is with a good deal of regret that I must advise that your submission of this morning, in answer to my letter of April 4th, does not appear to the government to meet the points raised in my letter nor to permit the introduction of a medical care plan consistent with the principles of the Thompson Committee or with the report of that committee.

In my letter of April 4th I referred to several important topics upon which the view of the college was sought. Our meeting of this morning clarified several of these areas. The college took the position that they would not recommend that their members co-operated in introducing a medical care plan if it was administered by the existing Medical Care Insurance Commission, under the provisions of the existing act. This position was adhered to notwithstanding the government's offer to appoint, in consultation with the college, additional members of the commission. Indeed the college was unwilling to agree to any plan that was not voluntary and provided through "existing or new voluntary prepaid health agencies" to which the government paid a subsidy and which individual citizens must join in order to obtain the benefits of the plan. These prepaid health agencies would not operate in the manner of the existing and familiar prepaid agencies. All but indigent patients would be required to pay their own doctors' accounts and then get reimbursed for a part of the account.

The government regrets that the college is unwilling to recommend that its members cooperate in any plan under the existing legislation even with significant, in our opinion, modifications to meet any reasonable objections which might be raised. The government is unable to accede to the proposals put forward by the college. Among the reasons why these proposals are unacceptable are:

- 1) That the proposals require the government to repudiate the existing Medical Care Insurance Commission.
- 2) That the proposals require that the government have no part in determining the total amount which the people of Saskatchewan must pay for their medical care.
- 3) That the proposals leave to the private health agencies, without provision for any independent adjudication or any participation by an outside body, the full right to set the level of premiums, coinsurance charges, or extra bills which any citizen would have to pay on behalf of himself and his family.

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- 4) That the proposals require that all medical care under the plan would be provided through private agencies and that no government-operated agency would be permitted.
- 5) That the proposals were equivocal on whether or not the existing program in Health Region No. 1 would be permitted to continue and they specifically excluded even the possibility of developing similarly administered regions over the whole province.
- 6) That the proposals require that citizens designated as medical indigents be dealt with in a special way and that they may identified when they consult their doctor.
- 7) That the proposals, by permitting a large number of private plans, strike at the roots of the insurance principle based on substantially the whole population, which was a basic principle of the plan recommended by the Thompson Committee and incorporated in the legislation.

The proposal presented by the college is, in our view, a proposal inconsistent with the traditions of public responsibility for medical care developed in this province over the last several decades. It is inconsistent with the Terms of Reference of the Thompson Committee or with the committee's report. It would provide a measure of protection substantially, in our opinion, inferior to that provided by the present voluntary plans. It would, in our view, not meet in an adequate or even acceptable manner the present and future needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

It is the intention of the government to proceed to introduce a medical care insurance plan designed to meet the needs of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I will lay on the table one of these copies and send the other to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. W. Ross Thatcher (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, I will not ask the indulgence of the House to comment on the Premier's remarks at this time

because I would like to digest them first. But I would like to ask him a number of questions. Its is apparent today that the college and the government have reached a final impasse. It is obvious today that there has been a breakdown of negotiations . . .

Mr. Speaker: — If I could interrupt the member for one moment. Members will realize that statements on the orders of the day cannot be debated, but I think on this occasion the House will agree that the Leader of the Opposition has the right to make a statement. Is that agreed?

Hon. Members: — Agreed!

Mr. Thatcher: — There are a number of questions that I would like to have clarified by the Premier. First of all he stated that the medical plan will be inaugurated July 1st as originally stated. Now, how can the plan proceed on July 1st, if there are no doctors to carry it out? The Premier also said that bills will be paid to individual doctors if they submit them. I would like to ask him on what basis — 100 cents on a dollar — 90 cents on the dollar — 80 cents on the dollar, or on what percentage? I think the figure might make some difference as to whether or not the doctors will participate, even individually. I would like to know if the government has contemplated any court action whatever to make the doctors participate in this legislation? I don't think such a course is desirable, I hasten to say.

If everything else fails, Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the government cannot get this medical plan going, will it stop collecting these \$2 million in taxes every month for the non-existent plan? I think the report this afternoon simply bears out what the opposition has been saying month after month, that this plan has been ill-conceived and hastily devised for political reasons. It violates the promise that the former Premier made, that any scheme that the government brought in would be satisfactory to both those giving the services and those receiving them. Obviously, as the doctors have pointed out today, this plan isn't satisfactory to them and therefore it violates one of the promises the government originally made.

I think, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier answers all these questions, he should also think very carefully, whether in view of all the promises that have been made, whether in view of all the taxes that have been collected

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on a fraudulent basis, this government should not consider immediate resignation — go to the people and let them decide. If this government can't give the people of Saskatchewan a satisfactory medical scheme, the Liberal party will be happy to do so at the earliest possible moment.

Premier Lloyd: — Mr. Speaker, for what was described as being a series of questions, it was a rather odd and extraordinary sort of procedure, I may say.

However, in commenting on the questions which the Leader of the Opposition has raised I start with the simplest one first. The question in regard to court action and the answer to that is of course absolutely no. The government at no time has considered and it is quite inconceivable that it ever would consider any kind of court action which would require members of this profession or any other profession to act in any way as was suggested by the Leader of the Opposition.

Secondly, in regard to meeting the provisions or the conditions set out on a number of occasions. I point out this, Mr. Speaker, that there were some five, and perhaps even six of these conditions. I submit they must be taken as a whole, as a group, as an entity. I submit that the proposals which we have had as a counter offer from the College of Physicians and Surgeons violate at least three and possible four of those conditions, that such could not in any sense whatsoever be considered.

With regard to the first question which the Leader of the Opposition asked, I am at this time only going to re-read a portion of the statement. I said, “the government appreciates the fact that representatives willing — indeed may not be free — to indicate acceptance of the proposal of the Advisory Committee and the government as contained in the act passed by the legislature in November, 1961. We sincerely believe, (and we have reason for believing) this does not stand in the way of individual members of the profession accepting for their services payment made available through the Medical Care Insurance Commission.”

In other words, I have a great deal more confidence in the members of the medical profession of Saskatchewan, than that indicated by the Leader of the Opposition in his remarks of a minute ago.

Government Members: — Hear! Hear!

Premier Lloyd: — I am not prepared, and quite frankly am not able to say at the moment, the basis on which payment will be made, that is whether it would be one percentage of the schedule of fees or another percentage of that schedule of fees. This is something that must be developed, and it is not a simple process, by the Medical Care Commission, a responsibility which this legislature has passed on to them. I would hope that we might still get, on matters of this kind, the necessary consultation with the medical profession in order to make this meaningful. I would hope if it is not acceptable and the decision has to be made without the benefit of their discussion there would be appropriate appeal measures established whereby this matter could be adjudicated.

Now with regard to his last remark — that the government ought to resign and have an election. May I say this, Mr. Speaker, we will have an election in which this matter will very likely figure largely. We will have it when the opposition don't want it, namely, after people have had a chance to enjoy for a couple of years the benefits of a medical care plan.

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

Hon. R.A. Walker (Attorney General): — Mr. Speaker, while we are still on the orders of the day, if I may be permitted, I would like to, through you, and on behalf of all hon. members express a welcome to a group of school students from the Kenaston school district who are visiting here this afternoon in the east gallery — these good looking, fine looking young people in the east gallery. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the members of the House I want to say that I hope they have had a very pleasant, profitable trip to Regina so far and that they will visit the Museum of Natural History and that they will enjoy their visit there and that they will go back with pleasant memories of their trip to Regina. I hope they will come again soon.

QUESTION: MEDICAL CARE

Mr. A.H. McDonald (Moosomin): — Mr. Speaker, before this matter that the House was brought back in to discuss this afternoon and the report the Premier has made to the House, before we dispose of this I would like to ask the Premier if we are going to

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have some occasion between now and the end of the session to discuss this matter further. If my memory serves me right, the estimates of the Department of Public Health are through and I can see no place, and I may be wrong, where this matter could be discussed at a later date during this session.

The second thing that I wanted to ask the Premier was if the submissions that the college have made to the government are going to be made available to the House.

Premier Lloyd: — Mr. Speaker, in answering the second one first of all — I would be very happy to make available to the members of the legislature a submission in the form that we have it. Unfortunately, and here I blame no one, because the time was not at all lengthy, the position is not spelt out in any detail and a great deal of the interpretation of it had to come as a result of the question and answer process which took place. But we will quite happily make available copies of that document, as well as copies of the letter of April 4th which I referred to in my statement which may be of interest to members of the legislature.

In regard to the first question as to when an opportunity could be afforded to discuss this matter. It seems to me that there is a possibility, of course, of adjourning the House when we reconvene tomorrow, if this is the desire, to discuss a matter of urgent public importance. This is one device which could be used, I would think at this particular time, if this was the wish of the opposition. I am quite sure that means can be found which will not be rejected or interfered with by the government so that in a regular sort of way we might have a debate on the matter.

Mr. McDonald: — Could I just ask one more question, Mr. Speaker? I wonder if the House is going to be provided with the suggestions that the government made to the medical profession of any changes in the legislation, as well as the request of the college to the government. In other words if we could have both sides of the story.

Premier Lloyd: — I think that this is detailed in considerable part in the matter to which I referred to and perhaps one other document may throw some additional light on it.

I say again and I repeat this statement, that in neither of the documents are exchanges provided by either group in any degree of detail. They, in fact, do not lend themselves to total understanding because they were developed in discussions.

Mr. McDonald: — But they will be made available.

Premier Lloyd: — I will make them available and I think I can do that this afternoon.

Mr. D.T. McFarlane (Qu'Appelle-Wolseley): — Mr. Speaker, before we leave the matter on orders of the day I wonder if the Premier could indicate whether or not there will be any amendments brought in to the House during this session regarding the Medical Care Insurance Act?

Premier Lloyd: — All I will say here is that this is a possibility. It is not a definite matter.

The Assembly again resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:00 p.m.