The Guardian

Covers Prince Edward Island Like The Dew

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Pay More And Get More

The medical care program proposed by the royal commission on health services is breath-taking in its implications, and may stir up as much controversy as the flag issue itself. The benefits would be sweeping in every field of health service, and they would be financed by higher taxes, perhaps even by lotteries in some provinces.

The commission's 914-page report is the product of an assignment that began when the former Conservative government appointed it on June 20, 1961. Besides a year of public hearings across Canada, the commission had prepared for it 26 research studies. In addition, the commission members made first hand studies of health systems in the United States, Britain, France, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Russia, Australia and New Zealand.

After all this, it produced its report with the comment: "This is what Canada and the provinces working together should do. It is not an idealist's dream but a practical program within Canada's ability, financially and practically. . . . It is what Canadians ought to strive for and expect through their governments. They should not be content with less."

As envisaged by the commission, practically no type of health service would be left uncovered, and it is emphasized that Canadians would willingly pay the higher taxes required. This is the issue on which controversy will hinge. It threatens, as the Toronto Globe and Mail predicts, to "rock the politicians back on their heels—not to speak of the doctors, the dentists, the insurance companies, the drug houses and others."

Opponents of the scheme will doubtless point to a report just issued by the Bureau of Statistics, which shows that the spending last year of all Canadian governments on health and welfare programs amounted to not less than $4,000 million, or the equivalent of 12.2 per cent of the national income. The comparable figures are seven per cent for the United States and eight per cent for the United Kingdom. It will be argued that Canada cannot go much farther than it has gone in this direction.

But the importance of the commission report lies in the fact that it comes from a government-appointed body. It is not a platform dreamed up by a left-wing party to gain political support, but a monumental document requiring the most careful study that Parliament and the provinces can give it.

UN Peace Force

Further trouble in Cyprus has underlined the difficult position of the United Nations peace force there, the need for more clearly defining its activities, and for more general support of its aims on the part of the world organization itself. Each time world peace is threatened and the U.N. steps into the breach, there is a scramble to put together a military peace keeping force. Each operation is marked by delay, confusion and criticism.

Creation of a permanent international force has been repeatedly suggested. The western powers, for the most part, favor some such arrangement; but the Soviet bloc is firmly opposed and enough unaligned countries have been suspicious of a standing military force to forestall its establishment.

Commenting on this situation, the Milwaukee Journal pays high tribute to Prime Minister Pearson as "one champion in peace keeping who is undismayed." Canada, it notes, was the first country to respond with military units to join British troops to keep feuding Greek and Turkish Cypriots apart. Since then, several countries have joined Canada in designating military units for service at the UN's request.

To date Canada has designated a battalion of 1,000 men. Sweden has introduced legislation calling for establishment of a special unit of 1,600 that would be immediately available. The Netherlands has offered 300 marines who would be available on 24 hours' notice. Norway, Denmark and Finland are planning to set up units that could be called separately or as a task force. And in New York last week the Shah of Iran said his country was prepared to earmark a contingent for peace keeping duty in "any part of the world." It would also provide money and instructors to help train UN units.

Thus the movement is growing. Mr. Pearson himself concedes that conditions are not ripe for setting up a permanent UN force, but he has held consistently to this objective. In the meantime, he has emphasized that stand-by contingents should be used only when requested by the UN and only for duly authorized peace keeping operations.

Costly Campaigns

One reason why Canadians don't want another federal general election until it's necessary is because, for supporters of every party, campaign costs have mounted to staggering proportions. The costs run still higher, of course, in the United States. This year it is the big contributors, the lobbyists, and even higher-salaried government workers, who are complaining, because the bite is being applied ever more heavily to these sources of funds. They are being asked to subscribe to $50- and $100-a-plate dinners—not only for presidential campaigns but for the individual campaigns of senators and congressmen.

Democratic and Republican spokesmen estimate that the 1960 campaigns, at all levels, cost something like $175,000,000. This year, the total figure may run over $200,000,000. There seems little promise of practicing economy. Candidates insist on wide television coverage and on zipping all over the country by airplane. One estimate is that it costs $250,000 to put on a respectable senatorial campaign in a big industrial state, and $500,000 to run for governor.

Along with the pressure on big contributors there is an uneasy feeling that this system is corrupting to political morals, and putting too much influence in the hands of the wealthy few. Reforms—new ways of financing campaigns—have been proposed from time to time. The late President Kennedy had just about completed plans, before his assassination, for a public campaign to expand the ranks of lowly contributors in the 1964 election.

The campaign was to be launched at a White House conference at which former President Eisenhower and other top figures in both parties would speak up and dramatize the need for obtaining more small contribution from the rank and file. The conference has never been rescheduled.

EDITORIAL NOTES

About 200,000 prefabricated homes were built in the United States last year. This was some 20 per cent of all the private single family homes started in 1963; during 1964 the proportion is expected to reach about 25 per cent. The estimated average cost per house package sold during 1963 was $4,038, down slightly from $4,044 the previous year.

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With the signing of a contract at the U.S. Embassy last week, more than 1700 Canadian employees of the U.S. Department of Defense in Canada are now included in a retirement pension plan. The contract covers approximately 400 employees of the U.S. Naval Station at Argentia, Newfoundland. A similar pension plan covering 1300 employees of the U.S. Air Force previously went into effect March 15 of this year.

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