

*Medical Care Act*

I shall be happy to discuss at length the content and objectives of the bill in committee as soon as the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs can be called. I hope the opposition will realize from these detailed studies that the bill is one which is required in current circumstances.

**Mr. Orlikow:** Tell that to the provinces.

**Mr. Lalonde:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) has been heard plenty of times, and I suggest he should also listen a little. The hon. member for Yukon talked about the representation of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories at federal-provincial conferences. He raised this matter in relation to conferences of ministers of health, but I submit to him that the question is obviously much broader than that: it relates to all federal-provincial conferences and to the status which should be given to the two territories in relation to the provinces and the federal government.

I have already indicated that the elected representatives or the appointed officials of the territories are welcome at these conferences. They are regularly invited. They can participate as observers or as part of the federal delegation. My door has always been open to them and I have frequent contacts with them. One might say that in fact they are in a privileged situation which enables them to talk, if they wish to do so, with federal ministers and officials at a very early stage in the development of policy. It is up to them to use the opportunities available to them as part of the federal delegation. I can, of course, understand their interest in participating at these conferences as full-fledged members, but that is a question which goes well beyond the field of health and welfare.

As for the transfer of health services to the Yukon, I submit the hon. member is a little late in raising this issue. I agreed to the transfer of health services in the course of the last 12 months. The hon. member drew an analogy with the transfer of the Alaska highway. I do not think it is a well chosen analogy, because a health care system is not very much like a highway; it is a more complex operation and it has to be treated with extreme care. The timetable I have proposed has been agreed upon by the northern representatives and there is no problem, as far as the elected representatives are concerned with respect to the timetable I have in mind. I understand the transfer is progressing normally, and I certainly look forward to the day when the Yukon will have full responsibility for the administration of health services for its own citizens. Obviously, this will have to be done co-operatively and will take some time.

● (1530)

With regard to the particular point about Dr. Connolly, I have investigated the matter with my officials and I have been unable to find any evidence of the threat of dismissal which the hon. member indicated. Nevertheless, the hon. member has raised a legal question which I am sure the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) will want to examine with his officials.

May I take the three minutes remaining to thank, first of all, all hon. members on this side of the House for their contributions to the debate. Eighteen members on this side of the House have participated, and having listened to

[Mr. Lalonde.]

their speeches, and read their speeches when I was unable to be in the House, I have no hesitation in saying those 18 speeches were overwhelmingly better than the 62 others made by members of the opposition. The most preposterous statements have been made during the course of this debate by the opposition, the worst coming from the NDP.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. The minister has the floor.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to hurt the feelings of opposition members, but I think they are beginning to realize what a mistake they made in opposing this bill. Hon. members opposite have said that this bill will be the end of hospital insurance. The bill has nothing to do with hospital insurance. I can understand members of the official opposition, particularly those from Ontario, raising this issue, but I submit they were completely out of order in doing so. They should be members of the Ontario legislature, not members of this House.

Another amazing complaint which has been made regularly is that there has been a lack of federal-provincial consultation. If ever there has been an area where there has been consultation over the last three or four years, it is this area. We have had regular meetings between ministers and officials and the discussions have been extremely productive. The speeches of some opposition members in this debate have really been like voices from the past. They are living in another age and are quite unacquainted with what has been going on in this field during the last few years. I shall have more to say about this subject at a later stage, Mr. Speaker. In the short time at my disposal, I shall merely say that extensive consultations have taken place, not only on this bill but on the whole question of health services. Yesterday and the day before there was a federal-provincial meeting of deputy ministers that went very well indeed. I will be meeting with the provincial ministers at the end of April, and I am sure this, too, will go well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. It being 3.35 o'clock p.m., pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 75C it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House. The question is on the amendment. All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. Members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. Members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Call in the members. The bells will ring for 15 minutes.

● (1550)

*Following the ringing of the bells:*