

Medicare

price Canadians have to pay to sustain this government in office.

Months ago opposition warnings about the dangers of inflation were ignored and ridiculed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Lapointe is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Grégoire: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I believe the matter now under consideration is the amendment to make provision for a fiscal compensation for the provinces desiring to set up their own medicare insurance plans. Therefore, I wonder whether it would not be preferable to restrict ourselves to the amendment now before us. The hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Nasserden) could come back later to the general question of health insurance, if he wishes.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is asking that the discussion be limited to the amendment which has been proposed to the house. He is asking a great deal. I would be very satisfied if the debate were limited to the bill which is before us, and this is what I suggest to the hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Nasserden).

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Nasserden: Thank you very much. As I look at the amendment which has been proposed, and read what is written on the front of this bill—

An Act to authorize the payment of contributions by Canada toward the cost of insured medical care services incurred by provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans.

—I cannot but think that the amendment is superfluous in a case such as this. Certainly, when we are dealing with financial considerations which will affect the ability of the provinces to deal with medicare it is fair to pay some attention to the financial positions of the provinces, the municipalities and the public at large who, after all, have to foot these bills.

Before I was interrupted, I was saying that the efforts made in parliament to warn against the dangers of inflation were labelled as obstruction by those across the way. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) sneered his way across Canada trying to establish that myth. Now in this bill, parliament is asked to legislate two years in advance on a matter of

[Mr. Nasserden.]

unfinished business involving provincial relations. The postponement written into this bill marks the unready posture of the government. I ask you, sir, is not this arrogance? Does this not constitute an obstruction to the effectiveness of democratic government?

There is a more serious charge to be levelled at the Minister of Finance and at the government. It is that they have misjudged the effect which the immediate implementation of this measure would have as a stabilizing factor in the Canadian economy particularly with regard to those living on low or middle incomes.

This measure is not a national health plan. It bears no resemblance to such a plan. Its terms even discourage provinces which do not presently have medicare plans from proceeding immediately with provincial schemes. I ask the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) this: What about provinces such as Saskatchewan, where the provincial treasurer has been led to believe that there would be federal assistance forthcoming in regard to the health care plan already in existence in that province? Over a two-year period, it was estimated, between \$25 million and \$30 million would be forthcoming to the province in a field such as this. I ask the right hon. gentleman to show some consideration and good will for those provinces which have placed plans in operation on the assumption that the word of the Prime Minister during two election campaigns and in the house could be relied on.

• (7:20 p.m.)

I want to deal for a few moments with the Saskatchewan plan, and trace its birth and growth. First of all, I must pay tribute to those pioneers of a national health plan who, as supporters of the Liberal party, had the satisfaction some 47 years ago to see their proposal enshrined as a plank in their party's platform. Unfortunately most of them have passed away since then, some of them never to know that their resolution would endure for 47 years, and still be the promise of the Liberal party. We cannot blame them for the dilatory manner in which that platform has been treated by successive Liberal governments. Lucky they are not alive today to witness the attitude of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) toward resolutions adopted at political conventions. Their only consolation might be that their resolution dealing with a national health plan was one of those promises kept by their party, to be carefully polished before and during elections, until it became almost a legend.