

*Medical Care Act*

controls as long as prices are controlled, does the federal government really believe it will be completely unable to effectively control prices? That is an answer we have not been able to get. Certainly there have been no results in spite of the statements by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) over the last few days to the effect that the program is really working. It may be working in respect of incomes, but it certainly is not working in respect of prices.

In September the minister refused to give the province an answer in respect of what new programs would be eligible for cost-sharing. Since September the provinces have received no word from him on this point. There is mention in Bill C-68 of arrangements for federal sharing and contribution in this regard. When will the minister tell us what programs he is prepared to negotiate with the provinces relating to cost-sharing? Saskatchewan would be very interested to know from the minister what the situation is in respect of pharmacare, denticare, hearing-aids and many of the other things that should have been in effect for many years. There are also things such as home nursing, expanded ambulance service and much more that we want to do and which need to be done.

The minister has been having talks with the provincial health and welfare ministers and their staffs. He has told them he favours shifting part of the cost of home care and nursing homes to the health budgets, but he has not said that he is prepared to cost-share such programs. The provinces want to know what is to be shared by the federal government. The provinces are still waiting to hear from the minister.

Even more important than medicare, in terms of money, are hospital and diagnostic services. When will the minister make clear what he has in mind for funding these programs, or does he simply intend to let the five years run out and leave the provinces holding the bag? It will be interesting to hear about this from the minister. At present the federal government participates in substantially less than 50 per cent of health care programs across the country. Of these, it pays approximately 50 per cent. In provinces like Saskatchewan it participates in approximately 60 per cent of all health care programs, leaving the province to pick up all of the cost of programs such as denticare, pharmacare, hearing-aids, and so on.

When new programs are introduced, the federal government often withdraws whatever little support it may be giving in that area. For example, when Saskatchewan brought in its hearing-aid program the federal government withdrew its support in respect of hearing-aids for Indians. Here we have these great humanitarian Liberals who wanted to share in the cost of a program on health care for Canadians taking this position. Talk about Mr. Scrooge at Christmastime! These are nothing but a bunch of cheap, inhumanitarian chisellers. As soon as Saskatchewan brought in the hearing-aid program, the federal government withdrew its support for hearing-aids for native people. Is the Minister of National Health and Welfare so hard up that he has to resort to that kind of two-bit chiselling?

● (1710)

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Chief Big Chiseller.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

**Mr. Benjamin:** He does that and says that the province's universal program which it paid for itself could cover Indians as well, and they are a federal responsibility. I have heard proposals from hon. members of the official opposition regarding this business of universality and deterrent fees. In my most friendly and kind way I should like to warn my good friends in the Progressive Conservative party to be very careful about anything their leader or former aspiring leaders say about the implementation of deterrent fees, because I should like to refresh their memories about what happened to a Liberal government in the province of Saskatchewan with regard to the implementation of deterrent fees. Deterrent fees are nothing more than purely and simply a tax on the sick. Politicians are honourable people, and politics is an honourable and worth while profession.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Benjamin:** However, politicians are not perfect, and I want to remind my hon. friends in the Progressive Conservative party that deterrent fees killed the Liberal party in Saskatchewan. That is one of the major things which killed it. I am trying to be friendly in urging my colleagues to my right that if their present leader or other former aspirants for the leadership open their big mouths about deterrent fees, their colleagues had better step on them quickly.

One of the basic principles of a hospital and medical care program, and all the ancillary services which go with it, is that it is universal. I was saddened and distressed when I read in the leaflets, statements and quotes of the new Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) that he questions the universality provision in social programs. I think that is a direct quote.

**Mr. Epp:** Are you sure?

**Mr. Benjamin:** If I am not accurate, I am certainly very close in my paraphrasing. If I am totally inaccurate about that, I am confident some of my colleagues will rise in their place and set me straight, but I think I am very accurate on that. I remind the official opposition and the government that it was during the 1972-74 period when we forced the government to restore universality with regard to family allowances, which is one of the specific items the new leader of the Progressive Conservative party happened to mention in questioning the universality of social programs.

In addition, I remind my hon. friends to the right and across the way that it was the official opposition, the New Democratic Party and the Social Credit party which forced the government to keep universality in family allowances. I just hope there will not be a 180 degree turn by the Progressive Conservative party, because I remind the House that we finished straightening out the Liberal party on that only a couple of years ago.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has now expired.

**Some hon. Members:** Let him go on.