

might appreciate my suggestion that the government is suffering from legislative arteriosclerosis. I will ask my hon. friend from Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) whether I am right on this. The government is suffering from an undue degree of inertia.

Mr. Knowles: Would that be covered by the bill?

Mr. Baldwin: No, unless we have the right kind of medical practitioner to deal with this ailment. This issue is doubly important. I can imagine a situation in which some province might put forward a claim under the provisions of the bill in respect of certain alleged insured services. The government of Canada may say: "We reject this claim because in our opinion these services include some which were performed by people whom the province has accepted as being medical practitioners but whom we in our uncontrolled discretion consider not to be medical practitioners". The fact that the minister has made certain statements in the house, and that subsequently the Speaker makes a ruling on the amendment, does not mean that the case rests there.

• (5:00 p.m.)

If such a decision should be made and a province and the federal government were determined to carry the matter to its conclusion, in the final analysis only the courts could decide whether or not the persons described by the province as medical practitioners, but excluded from that category by the federal government, do in fact fall within the category.

This being the case, Mr. Speaker, surely it is for the members of this house to define with the greatest degree of precision and clarity all of the terms and expressions used in this bill. This is, I suggest, one of the main reasons for the amendment which has been moved.

As I pointed out last night, in my province the category of persons registered under the medical professions act includes members of professions who the minister and the government are suggesting will not be included under this bill. How do we know, without the closest examination of the various medical professions acts of the provinces, that the situation will not be repeated in other instances? In other words, we are heading into a situation where conflicts are likely to arise between the definition of "medical practitioner" in the very loose way it is described in this legislation, and the more precise definitions which have been established in the various provincial medical profession acts.

Medicare

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for Simcoe East and the members of the opposition are doing a service to the house, to the government and to the country by defining with such accuracy and precision as that contained in this amendment the expression "medical practitioner". I would also suggest that a very heavy onus lies upon the government in attempting to argue in this particular case in support of the ruling of the Chair that the amendment is out of order. The onus upon them is so heavy that the government can hardly discharge it. Therefore, I urge Your Honour in your final considerations to give due weight to this particular aspect of the issue.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I regret that I should be put in the position on this St. Andrew's day of disagreeing with such a distinguished battery of spokesmen who have addressed themselves to this point of order. I am sure that Scotsmen all over the civilized world, and possibly in the uncivilized world, marking St. Andrew's day might regard our pursuits this afternoon as having been rather profitless.

Mr. Fulton: They would say you were being niggardly and mean.

Mr. MacEachen: I think the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton was most unkind when he accused me of splitting hairs on St. Andrew's day. This is a very grave charge, and I am sure he did not really mean it.

I am not going to prolong the discussion on the point of order. The purpose of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Simcoe East is to broaden the definition of the expression "medical practitioner" to include the healing arts. The healing arts embrace a large number of professions—dentists, optometrists, physiotherapists, nurses, osteopaths, podiatrists, chiropractors, to name a number. The effect of this broader definition would be to include within the expression "medical practitioner" these additional professions.

If the definition as proposed by the hon. gentleman is accepted, then it must be related to paragraph (d) of clause 2 which defines insured services as services rendered by medical practitioners. The purpose of the amendment is to broaden the scope and range of services beyond those contemplated in the resolution. This is a familiar argument which has been made on five former occasions, and the amendments were ruled out of order by the Chair because they would transcend the provisions of the royal recommendation.