

Medicare

The minister has been pleaded with, cajoled and argued with, but so far he has been completely rigid and inflexible. I want to point out that the minister himself recognized that there will have to be flexibility, and that other services will have to be added as time goes by. At page 7547 of *Hansard* for July 12, 1966 the minister is reported as having said:

Provincial governments may, of course, wish to expand the provincial programs so as to include additional benefits; there is nothing in the federal plan to deter them from doing so. We have assured the provincial governments that as soon as there is a consensus on the timing of further benefits to be provided over and above physicians' services, the federal government would consider enlarging appropriately and in due course the scope of benefits to which it would be prepared to contribute. As a first phase, however, the present resolution contemplates only the provision of physicians' services.

May I say to the minister that in my opinion it is not practical to suggest that if the provinces include any related services they will have to wait until the federal government gets a consensus from the provinces before the legislation is amended. There will, then, be a hiatus during which the provincial governments will be paying all of the cost of some services and getting a share of the costs of other services from the federal government.

It would be much better if the federal government were prepared to say to the provinces, when any province is prepared to provide additional services the federal government, by order in council, will agree to extend the services in any province that wants to avail itself of that extension.

I intend to propose an amendment, but certainly not the kind I consider would meet the situation. I would much prefer to see the kind of amendment which was moved yesterday by the hon. member for Hamilton South adopted as being the answer to the problem. The amendment I intend to propose will not place any burden upon the government and will not be mandatory, but it will at least leave the minister with sufficient flexibility that, if in the light of experience he wants to ask the governor in council to extend or include any of these services, he will have the power to do so. This would first of all enable him to act without having to wait for every province to concur, and it would prevent him having to wait until legislation could be passed in parliament. It would enable him to meet the situation as it arises from time to time, in light of the experience which he will get from administering this legislation.

I am convinced that if the minister persists in asking the committee to pass paragraph (d)

of clause 2 as it now stands, restricting medical care services to only those services provided by a medical practitioner, he will find that inside of one or two years after the plan is in effect he will be wishing he had asked for a certain measure of flexibility so that he could deal with this problem much more adequately than I think he will be able to do under the present definition.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I should like to move:

That paragraph (d) of clause 2 of Bill C-227 be amended by inserting therein, immediately after the word 'required,' in line 19, the following words: 'including such other related services as may be authorized by the governor in council.'

It seems to me that the advantage of an amendment like this is that it does not open the gate to the sharing of the cost of any further services by the federal government, but it does give the minister some elbow room if he finds the present definition too restrictive. All he will have to do is persuade his colleagues that there ought to be, by regulation or by order in council, some arrangement whereby such services—optometric care, dental surgery or physiotherapy—could be covered providing, of course, the provincial governments which will be operating the plan, desire to provide that service to the people.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Chairman, I should like to have an opportunity to consider the amendment moved by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam. Perhaps, that opportunity could be taken while the debate continues in respect of other paragraphs.

• (4:50 p.m.)

The Deputy Chairman: Do hon. members agree to follow the suggestion made by the minister?

Mr. Douglas: Let us stand the clause, Mr. Chairman, if there is no further debate on it.

Mr. MacEachen: Stand the paragraph.

Mr. Douglas: Yes, stand the paragraph.

The Deputy Chairman: I think other members of the committee wish to express their opinion on paragraph (d). The hon. member for Fraser Valley.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the representations I wish to make this afternoon follow somewhat the line that has been taken by many speakers in this debate. But I trust I will be able to inject at least several new points into the discussion that will help to convince the minister he ought to make some