

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

photograph of the hon. member for Perth on the occasion of the signing of the first hospital insurance agreement with the province of Ontario.

Certainly the development of this program has been accompanied by many other events which I think are of fundamental value to the Canadian people. For example, there is the promotion of standard hospital accounting; promotion of standard statistical reporting procedures; the full participation through the dominion council of health at regular meetings of all the provincial authorities. When I hear spokesmen from the province of Quebec, both my colleagues in my own party and hon. members in other parts of the house, saying that Quebec is not a province like the others, nowhere was this more brought home than at these meetings at which spokesmen for this province also spoke up for people who were French speaking, and for institutions in other provinces similar to those in their own.

I would be less than frank, Mr. Chairman, if I did not say to this committee that I would be concerned about the effect of contracting out procedures if this had the result of removing a voice from the conference table. The regular conference table meetings which have taken place, at which the voice of the province of Quebec was frequently more than just a voice for its own province, are of great importance. If the effect of contracting out were to create two Canadas, one of which would be operating under a different set of rules from a federal authority, I think this would be a very serious matter and might have consequences which perhaps have not been fully considered to date for the long term development and implementation of programs.

There are many other aspects of this matter, and when the appropriate legislation is placed before the house dealing with tax abatement procedures and percentages I hope at that time to make further comments. However, I do feel that the department is to be commended for the work it has done in the development of these co-operative federal-provincial programs. In this regard the term we like to use is "nation-wide", not "national" or "uniform" in any centralized sense. But they should be uniform in the sense that every one has certain basic objectives, and that they get together at the conference table once every six or three months to review the administration of the programs, the gaps in the programs, the difficulties in the programs, and make recom-

[Mr. Francis.]

mendations on necessary amendments to regulations—as they are in most cases—which could be enacted by order in council. This is a flexible procedure which could be maintained and was the very essence of many of the shared cost programs. I would hope there would not be any doctrinaire or rigid approach to the question which would destroy the flexibility, the sensitivity and the truly Canadian spirit which has been built into these federal-provincial co-operative relationships.

I repeat, I should not let this opportunity pass without indicating my concern over the possible destruction of relationships which have been very carefully built up over a long period of time. I have taken as only one example hospital insurance and health grants, which come immediately to mind, although many other programs on the welfare side are also involved in this package. I would think the minister, her officials and the staff of the department have given us a very good example of the way in which, freed from party slogans and the general ideas with which we become so often emotionally concerned, federal-provincial co-operation can be achieved, and I think the staff of her department are to be commended in this regard.

**Mr. Herridge:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to take this opportunity to make a few remarks about these very important estimates. First of all I wish to congratulate the minister for her diligence and the concern she has for her department, and I think all of us in fairness will admit that she has had a very trying and difficult period to go through in connection with the Canada pension plan, with all its complications and ramifications. Regardless of the delays in the past and the changes that have been required because of provincial demands, we all know her heart is in the right place, and we look forward to dealing with this plan in the very near future.

Mr. Chairman, I also thank her for her willingness to listen to the representatives of organizations, whether national or local, who have come to Ottawa. I think this is very fortunate indeed, because even those individuals at the centre of things can learn from those on the fringe of affairs, as it were, particularly with respect to problems concerning this department.

I should also like to pay tribute to her staff. I get along very well with the staff of the Department of National Health and Welfare because, as you know, it is not the responsibility of that department to promote