

Medicare

Mr. Ricard: Yes, but at least we do not profess hypocrisy as the Liberals do; we admit the fact, whereas the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Choquette) is one of those who dress up in hypocrisy to hide some dissensions between himself and some members of his party, as always, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege, a very short one.

The hon. member uses words which are not in keeping with parliamentary tradition. There are no hypocrites on this side, the only difference being that we, Liberals, are not scared stiff of our leader, we can speak to him, because he is a great champion of democracy, which the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) is not.

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Speaker, if you find that there is a question of privilege in what the hon. member for Lotbinière has just said, you are smarter than the rest of us. This is a senseless statement, similar to those he so often utters, and you cannot make heads or tails of it.

Mr. Speaker, all those rumours about disension have been denied, as in the past, and all interested individuals drew in their horns. To promote the weal of the party, everyone retracted what he had said before, and nobody resigned, since this could have endangered the life of the present government.

Mr. Speaker, I said a while ago that it was impossible to ignore the views and position of the provinces in the field of medicare. It is, for instance, a well-known fact that the Quebec government is now making an enquiry in that field before committing itself completely and passing legislation providing for the necessary assistance to Quebeckers.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, to take into consideration the Quebec premier's remarks because he is responsible for Quebec's future; not later than last Saturday, as can be seen in this morning's *Le Devoir*, the Quebec premier, Mr. Daniel Johnson, gave a severe warning to the federal government, stating that never, for any consideration, Quebec would allow the federal government to interfere in the field of public health and education.

Moreover, someone who held an important office in the former Quebec government, Mr. Kierans, who, I believe, would have headed the Department of Health, is of the opinion that there is now in the province of Quebec a shortage of medical practitioners and technical personnel.

[Mr. Choquette.]

Another reason why it is urgent to study this question from all angles is that many collective agreements include a medicare program to which the employer in some cases contributes 75 per cent, in others 90 or 100 per cent.

What shall we do, Mr. Speaker, with schemes already in operation and with which the workers concerned are satisfied? Shall we force these workers to spend more without getting more protection? I think these workers and heads of families are now happy with their lot and would not like to see the federal government intervene in a field under provincial jurisdiction, in other words carry on with the implementation of its program, without consulting the provincial government.

When he announced that the coming into effect of Bill C-227 would be postponed for a year at least, the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) referred to the threat of inflation which, as he said, he wanted to check. Now, his former Quebec colleague, Mr. Kierans, formerly minister of health does not agree at all with the federal Minister of Finance, for he was saying, himself, last Saturday, at a symposium held at McGill University, that there was no relationship whatsoever between inflation and medicare.

He said Canada would perhaps be faced with a recession next year, and what guarantee have we that the government will be in a better position than to put the medicare plan into force. No, Mr. Speaker; to be frank, the best advice we can give this government is to withdraw from a field of activity that does not belong to them. The sooner they will leave to the provinces the freedom and duty to legislate in the field of public health, the better it will be.

And the richer provinces are willing to reach agreements with a view to helping the provinces that are not as well off.

The amendment moved by my hon. friend for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) deplors the lack of co-operation on the part of the provinces. I agree fully with him. That is why, and also because this legislation constitutes on the part of the present Liberal government further intrusion in a field of provincial jurisdiction, I shall vote for the amendment, and reserve my decision on how I will vote when the bill comes for final adoption before the house. I shall most probably not change my mind between now and then. If the bill continues to encroach upon provincial rights, I shall most likely vote against it.