

*Canada Shipping Act*

from which I come—and I have done a little checking into this since the matter was raised by the hon. member in committee—the idea of designating a physician is simply, as I understand it, to ensure that a physician is prepared to act to treat sick mariners in emergency cases. This does not in any way limit the right of the sick mariner to enjoy the services of the physician of his choice.

In one of the ports in my constituency where I checked into this matter it was made quite clear to me that the customs officer is free, if the particular physician who has been designated is not available at the time, to call upon another physician to attend the emergency. There is an arrangement made to have some physician there, at least on a standby basis, to treat sick mariners as required.

While I have every sympathy with the desire of the hon. member to eliminate any form of patronage appointments as far as the provision of medical services is concerned, it is for this reason that I do not feel I can support his amendment, which I think is really unnecessary. I think it is really a question of this member and other members, from that part of the country whom I noticed applauding him conducting a bit of a campaign to straighten out what may be an unfortunate administrative hangover from the past.

**Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few comments in support of this amendment. It has long been a principle in this country that people should be entitled to treatment by any physician they choose.

**Mr. Pepin:** Especially since 1963.

**Mr. Yewchuk:** This amendment simply reiterates this principle of free choice of physician. It is a good principle and I think it should be supported.

I suppose the government's objection to it may well be an economic one. Perhaps the government thinks it will cost less if a designated physician at the port provides what could be determined as initial treatment or an emergency service. If the citizen of another country is ill while the ship is in port and urgently requires medical treatment there should be a physician near the port to render such treatment. If the situation were such that the citizen lived some distance away from the physician and might require continued treatment of his illness for a month or so, he would no longer receive the coverage

he received for the physician who looked after him at the port. There is much to be said against changing doctors in the middle of the treatment of an illness. As it stands now, the bill almost automatically requires that one physician commence treatment and another physician continue treatment for the duration of the illness.

The suggestion contained in the amendment is an extremely reasonable one and is in keeping with the democratic principle of freedom of choice, in this case of physician. Certainly it would be in keeping with our interpretation of a just society. I know this has now become an undesirable term for the government to use, and over the past few weeks government members have declined to use it. Nevertheless, we must keep it at the back of our minds because a lot of people supported the concept at one time.

**Mr. Comeau:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, is the parliamentary secretary not going to respond and explain whether or not the amendment is acceptable to the government?

**Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank all hon. members of the House and of the standing committee who have shown interest in Bill C-10. The government has tried to be as sympathetic as it can to all of their suggestions.

May I again state in this House that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) did instruct me to bring at the committee hearings on this bill an amendment along the line the committee members requested. It relates to clause 4 of Bill C-10, allowing mariners insured under the bill to obtain drugs at the cost of the insurer.

As far as the first amendment submitted by the hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) in connection with designated physicians is concerned, may I say in answer that treatment by a designated physician, or in large ports at a government operated clinic located on the waterfront, is provided for by the internal regulations and has been found to be satisfactory. Since the purpose of Bill C-10 is to phase out the provisions in Part V of the Canada Shipping Act as they become redundant for residents of Canadian provinces that introduced medical care insurance plans, there is no intention of increasing benefits in the last few months to the service that is being provided already. The depart-