

Health Care

tions to health, on the condition that the existing national standards be maintained.

As a result of the proposal that we have put forward, over the next several years the provinces, through the amount provided under the health formula made up of shifted tax resources and cash, will have the flexibility to make adjustments which should make funds available for other health programs. When the point is reached at which the value of these taxes begins to exceed the contribution under the health formula, the surplus, of course, will be available also at provincial discretion for assisting in total health financing, as I previously mentioned.

Mr. Stanfield: In 1995.

Mr. Lalonde: I think that once more the Leader of the Opposition is quite wrong. I suggest that he sharpen his pencil and he will find out that the cross over for many provinces will be some time in the early 1980s. I am not surprised that the finances of Nova Scotia were in such a bad shape when he left if he used such methods of calculation.

In conclusion, the federal proposal stresses the maintenance of the existing national standards and provides flexibility and thrust funds which will allow the federal funds to be used by the provinces for their total health financing. I think I can also say that several provinces would object in particular to new major shared-cost programs at this time, such as implied by the resolution before the House.

The mover of the motion asked a few questions in his speech, and I would like to spend a minute on them. First of all, he asked whether the \$1.1 billion surplus which would be appearing according to our proposal over the next six years will cover 50 per cent of the cost of hospital and medical care. I can only tell him that this excess of \$1.1 billion has been arrived at on the basis of figures provided by the provinces after many consultations and meetings with the provinces, and that on the basis of present projections as provided by the provinces over the next six years \$1.1 billion more will be coming to the provinces for health expenditures than they would be getting under the continued present system of fifty-fifty sharing under the medicare and hospital insurance acts. I can assure him of that. I for one would say that if I were on the other side and if I were given a bet with odds of 1.1 billion, I think I would be crazy to refuse it. I would certainly not hesitate to take such a bet.

So far as the second question is concerned, as to whether it would be adequate to move into phase two and three of health care, I am not quite sure to what the hon. member was referring. I presume he was talking in terms of denticare and pharmacare, but I am not sure that that is what he had in mind. If that is the case, obviously this financing formula does not provide for those programs, but it has been quite clear from the beginning in our discussions with the provinces that the financing formula was not aimed at covering these plans. If the provinces were to agree with the federal government to embark upon new, substantial programs such as denticare and pharmacare on a universal basis, then there would obviously have to be new agreements, new discussions, and probably new legislation to put such programs into effect. As I have stated

[Mr. Lalonde.]

before, there is nothing in our proposal that would preclude such an eventuality.

Let me say in conclusion that we believe what we have proposed is a fair and responsible answer to the problem. The moneys available are much more substantial than those available under the existing programs. Obviously, the provinces are free to reject the proposal; that is their right. But the federal offer has been made after over two and a half years of discussion, and if the provinces decide to reject it or refuse to consider it any further, at any rate let us not hear any more about federal rigidity and refusal to co-operate. I think the Canadian public and this House should know at whose door any blame should lie.

● (1410)

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be able to participate in the discussion of what I think is a most excellent motion presented with a most excellent speech by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas). It seems to me that members of his party are generally at their best when opposing the government, an exercise in which they are not getting much practice but they can still do it. I listened most attentively to the hon. gentleman and found myself in agreement with the vast majority of his speech and I commend him.

It is an important subject. I notice that the minister said that the motion gave him the first opportunity to discuss this subject. I would say to him that it should not have been the first opportunity; he should have made a statement on motions before this conference or at least he certainly should have made a statement on motions after its dismal collapse. There should not be any reluctance to discuss in this House, before representatives of the people of Canada, the plans which he has made for the very important portfolio which he now holds.

There are so many areas of concern of which we must take note that I wondered which particular segment the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands would choose. There is great concern across the country for the casual, foot-dragging and underplaying with regard to the grave drug situation in this country. There is great anxiety, too, about the need to move quickly toward more efficiency in health care. The proposal of the Canadian Nurses Association is something which I think should commend immediate attention. There is great anxiety with the cynical disregard which there now seems to be for the whole question of medical research. One is appalled at the minute increase in the vote in this tremendously important field in this year's estimates which is just a little over \$2,000. The hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands, having decided to move into this field, must have had quite an exercise in intellectuality in choosing the area of immediate concern.

In his speech the minister indicated that, in his view, the plan which was so brusquely turned aside by the provinces a few days ago was not in fact a complicated plan. When I read the document I thought it was a bit complicated.

Mr. Stanfield: Deliberately so.