

Medicare

I think it is quite inappropriate at this stage to propose an alternative and different scheme without there being new and different recommendations from His Excellency. This is a point that I raise as being a fundamental objection to this amendment, namely that it proposes a scheme alternative to that proposed with the royal recommendation.

An hon. Member: That is opting out.

Mr. MacEachen: I am not so sure whether it is appropriate to move this amendment at this stage. It seems to me that it is an amendment that could be made, in a sense, in committee. It would seem to anticipate the committee stage of the bill. I suggest even if it were out of order on that ground that any amendment of this kind, or this proposed amendment in committee, would be irregular for the reasons I have suggested, because it does propose an entirely different scheme from that which received the Governor General's recommendation.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I heard the minister's objections and I do not feel that it is necessary for the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) to take part in the debate at this time. I take it for granted that he wants to give the reasons why the amendment is in order and I can guess the arguments he would make, which are those put forward when the amendment moved by the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) was considered a few days ago. I gave due consideration to the arguments and objections made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) which are, of course, very serious. I have already indicated how hard it is for the Chair to render a decision when substantive amendments are concerned. Generally speaking, all that is asked, all that is written is that the amendment impedes the progress of the bill before the house, and that is the main reason why I accepted the amendment moved by the hon. member for Simcoe East. And that is why I feel that I must now accept the amendment moved by the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard).

The minister is suggesting that the amendment goes beyond the resolution which was passed. I studied the terms of that resolution, as submitted to the house, and it seems to

me that it is drafted in abstract and general terms which I will now read:

[English]

● (7:10 p.m.)

Resolved, that it is expedient to introduce a measure to authorize the payment of contributions by Canada toward the cost of insured medical care services incurred by provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans.

[Translation]

As I said, that resolution is written in very general terms and so is the proposal made by the hon. member for Sherbrooke, and I do not think that in principle it goes against the principle contained in the resolution.

The situation is not very clear. Once again, I hesitate to make the ruling I am now making but, since I am not quite sure, I take the liberty, and I think it is my duty to do so, to give the benefit of the doubt, at least for this once, to the hon. member for Sherbrooke and to allow him to continue the discussion on his amendment.

[English]

Mr. E. Nasserden (Rosthern): When the house rose at six o'clock I was outlining some of the conditions which face us in this country as we prepare to deal with this piece of legislation brought forward by the government for our consideration. I was pointing out that Canadians have come to realize the price they now have to pay in order to keep the government opposite in power. I drew attention to the way in which businessmen in this country have been brought face to face with the highest fixed costs in the history of this country. Consumers have been subjected to the highest cost of living in our history. Yet all they have been promised is Joe Greene's Almanac and Shopping Guide for unenlightened housewives and consumers.

This government deliberately encouraged the trend toward the highest interest rates in Canadian history. Taxes at all levels have gone up, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) promises further increases in the baby budget which will be forthcoming later in the year. Is it any wonder that there has been labour unrest in this country?

These things, coupled with the indecision revealed in matters affecting foreign policy and the confusion caused by a lack of domestic purpose, have resulted in a lack of national unity and an unequal personal privation for those living on pensions and fixed incomes. These things, together with the most careless Prime Minister in Canadian history, are the