

Medicare

their own admission, doctors are overworked at present and claim that this state of affairs will continue and increase with the advent of medicare in Canada. How much worse will this be for the doctors if no other groups are included, not to mention the fate of the other groups of whom I am speaking. In many instances doctors refer their patients to optometrists, psychologists, podiatrists, chiropractors, physiotherapists and osteopaths and other groups, none of whom are intentionally left out. If their services are not to be included in this plan, it will obviously mean that patients will not enjoy their services except by extra payment. This again would act as a deterrent to a well rounded, total medical care program. For example, psychiatrists could not begin to look after all the people whom they would be expected to look after if it were not for the able assistance of psychologists, and ophthalmologists could not begin to look after all the people requiring their services in this country if it were not for the able assistance which optometrists give.

Orthopedic surgeons would not be able to look after all the people for whom podiatrists now care and many patients who now are sent to physiotherapists and chiropractors would be awaiting treatment which they would be unable to receive. The exclusion of any or all of these groups is a selective action in favour of one profession. I am a member of the medical profession and although I do not feel that this profession has been neglected, I think that in order to have a well rounded plan we should include these paramedical groups to give the proper coverage which the Canadian people are expected to have.

On the strength of these arguments I would like to move the following amendment:

That paragraph (d) of clause 2 of Bill C-227 be amended by inserting therein, immediately after the word "required," in line 19, the following words:

"and such other health and paramedical services as may be included in a provincial medical or health care insurance plan,".

● (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Chairman, with your permission I should like to raise a point of order in connection with the amendment moved by the hon. member for Hamilton South, if this is the appropriate time to make an argument.

The argument made by the hon. member for Hamilton South is that, in addition to the insured services of the medical practitioners, the range of services included in this bill should be broadened to include other health

[Mr. Howe (Hamilton South).]

and paramedical services. It is quite clear that within the range of the health professions there are, in addition to medical practitioners, other practitioners including, to single out two, optometrists and the chiropractic profession.

These practitioners are not members of the medical profession. In saying that, I do not intend to pass any judgment on their contribution to the general health field, but you will notice, Mr. Chairman, that the resolution which had the recommendation of His Excellency and which preceded this bill was carefully drawn so as to restrict contributions solely and exclusively to medical care services. I do not have it before me, but the resolution was restricted to contributions by Canada solely toward the cost of insured medical care services, namely those services to be performed by medical practitioners.

The amendment moved by the hon. member for Hamilton South will certainly include, for example, the optometric profession, which under provincial laws is not regarded as that part of the medical profession which provides medical care services. In fact, an examination of the provincial laws will reveal that their terms strictly exclude optometrists from the practise of medicine.

Similarly, the definition of optometry in the provincial laws is drawn in such a way that it is not regarded as a branch of the medical profession. So, these other health and paramedical services which are sought by the hon. member for Hamilton South are not included in fact within the definition of medical care services under our law.

We have sought advice from His Excellency in providing for contributions for the provisions of medical care services, strictly and exclusively, and the resolution was drawn for that sole purpose. If we had so intended we would have asked His Excellency to authorize contributions to health services or the healing arts. But we confined ourselves to medical care services because it was the intention of the government to restrict contributions to that single field among the health professions.

My point of order is that the amendment moved by the hon. member for Hamilton South is not in order because it goes beyond the scope of the original resolution and the message from His Excellency.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chairman, may I first of all commend the hon. members for Hamilton South and Simcoe East for their amendments, though the hon. member for Simcoe East has indicated he will be moving his amendment at