

Medicare

It is high time, I believe, that the government should assume its responsibilities and bring home to some backward provinces that these are necessities imposed by present conditions and that we should act immediately. I understand that certain circumstances bring about dilatory measures. For instance, we have decided that the bill would not take effect immediately, on account of financial contingencies. As far as my province is concerned, I believe that this is a happy occurrence, because our people ask themselves many questions on different subjects and besides, suffer from this acute financial problem; they want to be given a breather before embarking on this project. I believe that this delay will give the central administration an opportunity to meet with representatives of the ten provinces to try to come finally to an understanding on those basic clauses and, perhaps with the consent of the ten provinces, to add to what has been suggested up to now, that is, to offer even more coverage under this bill.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I say that this is a good piece of legislation providing for what I shall refer to as minimum benefits which, of course, will have to be extended further eventually. In this regard, I would be ready to support some of the amendments proposed, if they did not have the effect of delaying passage of the bill or perhaps creating certain complications or aggravating that lack of comprehension between provinces. As I say the most understanding and acceptable amendment, in my view, is that moved by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam. Again, I would be ready to support it any time. Furthermore, I suggest that those who still entertain doubts on certain aspects of the bill should read carefully the speech delivered by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) last October 25, which I believe was circulated among all hon. members, and which makes a very careful analysis of all clauses, and all objections. Of course, the only one which I find perhaps a little drastic is when he refers to the political aspect and to the criticisms made. I want to keep away from dealing with that aspect. I sum up by saying this: the legislation, as drafted, is an acceptable, worthwhile and well-timed initiative which, as presented, will allow sufficient time for the discussion to continue at the federal-provincial level and for the governments eventually to profit by all the suggestions made and to

[Mr. Mongrain.]

which, of course, the government and their experts gave thought themselves.

Therefore, I intend to support this bill, and I think I can take the liberty of appealing to all my colleagues in the opposition to consider it precisely in this light: this is a minimum plan which, for another year at least, the government can discuss with the provinces, a year during which the government can consider the act anew and, perhaps, amend it along the lines of the suggestions made, particularly if it accepts the amendment of the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam, which opens an avenue that should meet with the wishes of all men of good will.

[English]

Mr. Brand: Mr. Chairman, I have not much to say on this matter but I would like to say something different about clause 2 (d). In so doing I wish to refer to what the minister said on October 25, as recorded at page 9103 of *Hansard*. My reference is to paragraph (d) which reads in part: "insured services" mean "all services rendered by medical practitioners..." My concern is whether or not doctors, if they so desire, will be able to practise outside the ambit of such a medical plan. Since the paragraph refers to "all services rendered by medical practitioners" I cannot see how a doctor can practise apart from the government scheme and charge fees accordingly. Undoubtedly, there are a few doctors who will wish to do so. If they look at some one with a chest condition, or take out a pair of tonsils, they will in effect be performing an insured service.

This is a plan to insure people against the cost of medical illness. The minister has said so on many occasions, and I can quote him if he wishes, but in fact what we are proposing to do here is insure the services of the doctor, which is a different thing entirely.

As recorded at page 9103 of *Hansard* the minister said:

However, what we are proposing in this legislation will make it possible for any physician to practise outside the plan if he so wishes. He will have full freedom to practise outside the plan, as do physicians with respect to certain medical care insurance plans now in operation in Canada.

He went on to describe the full freedom of the physicians and, as recorded at the bottom of that page, the minister said:

We have met them on that point. Naturally I do not think that in any province this will be widely exercised by the medical profession, but it is a right which they wish to have and which I think they can have without affecting the operation of the plan.