

*The Address—Mr. Holmes*

dealing with the issue most important to each and every Canadian, his health.

The government's disregard of major health problems, national in scope, will result in needless tragedies in the homes of thousands of Canadian families. During the last session of Parliament numerous proposals were introduced by members of my party, and by other hon. members of this House, which would have contributed effectively, in a positive way, to the health of Canadians; but no action was taken.

During the last session, I clearly enunciated an action oriented program to deal with the major problems of alcohol and drug abuse, and again no action was taken. Only today, during the question period, I raised a very special issue concerning the Medical Research Council, the importance of that particular organization and its interrelationship with health care in Canada. Again, the answer did not suggest that there would be action. I respectfully suggest that if the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde), who is not present, spent less time kicking around political footballs and spent more time devoting his energy to the health of Canadian citizens, perhaps the comments which I am about to make would be redundant and programs dealing with health problems would have been included in the throne speech.

May I remind this House, and in particular the government, that with the passage of the Department of National Health and Welfare Act in 1944, establishing the Department of National Health and Welfare, it was clearly defined that the department was charged with the duties, powers and functions extending to and including all matters—I repeat, all matters—relating to the preservation of the health, social security and social welfare of the people of Canada over which the Parliament of Canada has jurisdiction. I cannot emphasize too strongly that this government has not discharged its responsibilities in carrying out these duties, unfortunately to the detriment of countless thousands of Canadians.

Governments must work continually to fulfil their responsibilities of public trust and confidence, but it is also true that individuals must assume personal responsibility for the promotion and maintenance of their own good health. Future federal government health policy must reflect this dualistic approach. More emphasis must be given to disease prevention and to the development of educational programs designed to influence our health habits. We need a change from the present belief that good health and good medicine are synonymous. There is a need for the re-thinking of our manpower and institutional requirements. Our preoccupation to date has been with the health care organization and management which uses approximately 95 per cent of the health dollar. It is clear that the answer to many of the problems in the area of health care management depend upon appropriate federal-provincial consultation and co-operation.

I believe that the financial impasse facing the provinces can be resolved and, in accomplishing this goal, energies can be more effectively directed to health problems. There should be immediate negotiations with the provinces to effect a transfer of tax point payments to provincial jurisdictions. Surely, the provinces facing the ultimate responsibility of controlling costs should have the growth in tax

revenue as a strong base upon which to launch extensive health program reorganization and further development in critical areas of need.

This implies, of course, that the entire management and administration of the health care organizational aspect of health should be transferred to provincial control. In order to do so, it would be necessary for the provinces to accept national uniform standards and guidelines designed to promote a comprehensive, universally accessible, portable system between all provincial jurisdictions, and recognize that the federal government has an important leadership role as well as the responsibility to develop programs designed to attack problems national in scope. In conjunction with the foregoing proposals, the federal government should guarantee that no future forced cost-shared health programs would be introduced without the agreement of the provinces.

● (1640)

A problem of major concern is that related to physician manpower requirements. Inequities have developed in the distribution of physicians throughout Canada. There is a necessity for immediate high level federal-provincial negotiations to achieve the following objectives. We need to define the total health manpower needs. We need to establish specialist requirements in all areas of post-graduate study. We need to determine an appropriate number of specific specialists per unit of population. There is an absolute need to encourage physicians to practice in rural and northern areas by devising methods of incentives. We must, of course, re-evaluate our medical school production capability. One is constantly concerned with the large number of excellent applicants, young people in Canada, who have the ability to become excellent physicians, but are unable to carry on their studies because of the lack of facilities. We must devise methods of encouraging greater entry by students into family medicine.

An area of growing importance is the use of computer technology. There is a need, in concert with the provinces, to update and modernize existent computer technology in Canada. Moreover, the federal government in cooperation with the provinces should undertake the responsibility of developing an ongoing annual health status survey of Canadians. While the privacy of each Canadian would be preserved, the survey would uncover new problems accurately and early. In addition, the survey would allow evaluation and analysis of the impact of various federal and provincial programs.

The possible benefits from regionalization of health care has been enunciated by this party in the past, and will contribute substantially to the rationalization of our present health system. While the ultimate responsibility for implementation remains within the jurisdiction of the provinces, it is the responsibility of the federal government to assist in the establishment of national norms and standards. To accomplish this goal, the federal government should extend the mandate of the community health directorate of the Department of Health and Welfare to assist such areas as the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and individuals such as Indians and Eskimos.

[Mr. Holmes.]