

Medicare

Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to this aspect of the bill and I am inclined to take a stand against it because of the position of the province of Ontario in regard to this matter. Nevertheless I am prepared to vote for the bill because it provides financial assistance to the provincial governments, all of which need it, as the federal government will learn during the course of this week.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say once again in regard to the bill before us that I believe a disservice is being done to this country. I do not think this bill is so earthshaking that it will never come up again, and I do not think it means we should not proceed with it. However, the government is doing a disservice to the professional people, the doctors, the nurses and the associated professions by not providing enough facilities and a sufficiently enlarged program for the training of doctors, nurses and research personnel. I also believe, as I said the other evening, that the services of optometrists and ophthalmologists should be included in this legislation, and this evening I will add to those professions the chiropractors.

I am now holding in my hand an article printed and distributed by Hon. M. B. Dymond, M.D., Minister of Health of the province of Ontario in connection with the discussions which took place in the provincial legislature concerning the participation of our optometrists and chiropractors. In this particular case it seems rather odd that it was a Liberal member who was fighting for the cause of the optometrists and chiropractors. I stand tonight in this house and I say that the same situation exists at the federal level in regard to these professions. I believe that this bill should take into account the professional assistance of these people, which would relieve the other participants of the profession.

In conclusion I want to say once again—and I cannot be too vehement in my views in this regard—that the people who are suffering from what I would call the blackmail methods of this government are the old age security pensioners of this country. I receive many telephone calls and I guarantee that the members on the Liberal side of this house will be receiving as many telephone calls on the week ends as I have received in this regard. I am asked: "When will something be done? We need assistance."

I believe that the people living in remote rural areas are better off than those living in organized municipalities, but the principle remains the same in all cases. These people

[Mr. Winkler.]

are being deceived by the government; they are being made to wait unnecessarily. Although under the terms of this bill they may be assisted in some ways, I think that if the government were to change the order of business tomorrow by unanimous consent and agree to increase old age security, so far as this party is concerned I could guarantee its passage in less than half an hour provided it were equitably distributed. I pledge the support of my colleagues and I assure our co-operation if the government were to bring in this legislation by unanimous consent.

● (9:20 p.m.)

Hon. Hugh John Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to make some observations on the motion of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) for the second reading of Bill C-227, which is recorded in the order paper as being an act 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. I am very conscious of the fact that speeches made in this house in connection with the motion, and also the amendments which have been moved and voted upon, have conveyed to the house many different opinions regarding a proper course for the government to pursue in connection with the whole matter.

I do not profess to be able to introduce any particular new thought in connection with the motion for second reading, but there are a few aspects of the whole situation which I feel deserve to be brought to the attention of the house. I would like to emphasize that the bill authorizes the payment of contributions. In other words, I am sure no one would argue for a moment that it does not become a money bill. I assume that the government have in mind what type of taxation they expect to impose to furnish the funds which the imposition of this bill will render necessary. But what I am unable to understand, and I hope the minister will help some in that regard before long, is why the government appears to be confident that they know what the situation in this country will be so far as finances are concerned on July 1, in the year 1968. I do not believe the government or the minister, or any member in this house for that matter, have any access to any crystal ball by which they are informed in advance of what the general financial condition will be on July 1, 1968. The government does not even know that it will be the government in 1968.