

*Medicare*

Let me also refer to a brief presented by the province of British Columbia to the plenary session of the federal-provincial conference held in Ottawa on May 31, 1965. On page 4 there is a section dealing with comprehensive medical services, and it states in part:

British Columbia endorses, without reservation, the introduction of comprehensive medical services for all Canadians as soon as possible and irrespective of ability to pay, provided that the government of Canada will share 50 per cent of the costs. The government of British Columbia stands ready to bear the other 50 per cent of the required public expenditure to ensure adequate health services to all provincial residents. British Columbia recommends that these financial sharing arrangements be accepted by the government of Canada for early implementation. Details of health services to be provided can then be promptly completed by the appropriate departments of our respective governments.

As I pointed out, we in the Social Credit party are in full support of the principle enunciated in Bill C-227. I indicated that while supporting the principle of the bill we are not suggesting we are in full support of every provision.

Four principles have been laid down by the government which provincial governments must meet in order to qualify under the provisions of this legislation. First, they must provide comprehensive medical coverage; second, it must be universal; third, it must be operated by a government agency, and fourth, it must be portable between provinces.

In dealing with these various qualifications laid down I think we must recognize that there are some changes which have been proposed or placed in the measure by the government. First, the plan must be operated by a government agency. It seems to me there has been some flexibility introduced in this particular provision, and even though it has not been accepted or approved by some individual members of the house, I believe it is a very wise provision or concession, in that it does not necessarily mean it must be operated by a government agency, but by one recognized and approved by a provincial administration.

As far as the test of comprehensiveness is concerned, I do not think it has been met because there are certain classes of medical services that are and will not be included. No provision is made for dental services or for services of chiropractors. As was pointed out today, the costs of an optometrist will not be covered by the provisions of this measure. I do not think therefore that we can say this is

[Mr. Patterson.]

a comprehensive measure. Many medical or health requirements are not covered, and it would seem to me that if we are to enter into a plan such as this it must cover all those services required by the people of our country.

As far as the matter of universality is concerned, we do believe there has been a certain flexibility introduced in that for the first two years there must be coverage for 90 per cent of the insurable residents of a province, and thereafter 95 per cent. Perhaps there should be changes made in this regard lowering the desired coverage in the introductory period to perhaps 80 per cent or 85 per cent. If this were done I think it would encourage the provinces which already have health care services or medical plans to integrate their plans with the federal plan, and in other ways meet the qualifications laid down.

The feature of portability is desirable, and we are pleased to note that when a person moves from one province to another he will be covered by the insurance of the province from which he has moved until he qualifies for coverage in the province to which he has moved. There has been some criticism about the statement regarding this principle of flexibility as introduced in the measure. I believe flexibility is absolutely necessary to ensure provincial co-operation.

Perhaps there will have to be further changes made if the minister really intends to meet the insurance needs of provinces so that they will be encouraged to enter into this program. Flexibility is desirable as well to accommodate provincial plans already in operation. It has been pointed out, charged or alleged that the government has retreated. It is often said that retreats are necessary to win wars and perhaps that is the case here. The government may have to make further changes to meet the wishes of provincial administrations who, after all, have the major responsibility for providing health services to the people of their communities.

● (8:20 p.m.)

Hon. members who have spoken today have mentioned various features which are absolutely necessary if a health plan is to be successfully implemented. I am not going to enlarge on them or even enumerate them, but I think the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) covered them very thoroughly when he referred to the necessity for trained personnel, training facilities, hospital facilities and all the other things that are absolutely essential if a medical care plan is to be