

*Canada Health Act*

● (1200)

The Government has a few more hours, Mr. Speaker, and I urge it to reconsider its decision. I urge the Government to think about the wisdom of supporting this amendment. As we look to the future, we can see jobs in manufacturing disappearing. We can see the disappearance of a lot of jobs in Canadian society. It is a little harder to look ahead to see where the jobs of the future are likely to be, but it is clear that one area of jobs will be that of human services. That will require generally more people in the future. We have in this country a gradually aging population and we can see that our health care system is going to have increased demands made upon it simply as a consequence of the demographics of the aging population. In the future we are going to require more people in the health care professions, not fewer.

We in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, in the month of March, 1984, should be looking at every clause in this Bill from the viewpoint of whether or not it will encourage the best and the brightest to commit their lives to human service through the health care profession. Anything which goes in the opposite direction is just simply wrong. But anything which encourages young people to commit their talent, energy and humanity to the care of others is going in a positive direction.

We may look at this Bill as being designed to provide more publicity for the Government in trying to deal with a specific economic situation, but at the heart must lie our concern for those who are less fortunate healthwise than most Members of this Chamber. We can go to any hospital in this or any city in the country and see people concerned, scared and suffering. That can only be alleviated through treatment by people with skills, commitment and compassion. The lives of the sick are made a little better when people with those qualities have committed their lives to that kind of service.

Amendment No. 2 is an important amendment in that it indicates that Members of this Chamber, the highest court of the land, want to say to the young people of this nation that if they will commit their lives in this field, then we will enact the legislation which ensures that when they have completed their training, they can be a full partner and a full participant in our health care system, not a second-class partner.

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Mr. Speaker, this Bill is back in the House after two months of detailed study in committee, and there are certain amendments before us, as you have delineated. There have been some surprises along the road with this Bill, surprises to the Canadian Medical Association, the provincial Governments and the people of Canada generally. However, I do not think there was anything more surprising than, when one turned on the radio this morning, to hear a CBC report stating that this Bill had come out of committee with not very much argument, very little debate and very little controversy. The only thing I can say about that, Mr. Speaker, is that, as usual, the CBC was not present at any of the committee meetings and really did not have a clue as to what took place.

The reason I mention that, Mr. Speaker, is that during the course of debate in committee on this Bill we heard some very, very poignant and telling testimony from groups, organizations and individuals, experts in the field of health care. As a result, members of the Opposition were able to put forward amendments that we knew would improve the Bill. Not only were we prepared to put them forward and listen to such telling arguments as were presented by the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Nurses Association, but we were able finally to convince the Government that it would be in the interests of the health care delivery system of this country to make the amendments we had originally proposed in the name of the Government so that they would be incorporated in the Bill.

The reason I mention that, Mr. Speaker, is that after much protracted debate and argument in committee, there was one proposal which the Government refused to adopt even though it acknowledged, as the Minister has acknowledged here this morning, the merits of the argument. The arguments for the proposal were put forward primarily by witnesses from the Canadian Association of Interns and Residents, the young graduates coming out of medical school, the people who are still in training or who have just recently graduated. They are concerned about their future and whether or not they will be able to practise the profession for which they have spent so many years training. These people came before us and talked as individuals, made their presentations collectively, and there is no doubt that the strength of their argument made a major impression on the committee.

There is no question that we do not want to see any kind of restrictions, either in a professional or, as my colleagues, the Hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday) and the Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) have said, any restriction on mobility even in moving from province to province. It is debatable, obviously, whether or not those restrictions will be put in place at the provincial level, although there is one case where perhaps that is already being done and it may happen in other cases. We have the opportunity here, Sir, to ensure that that kind of restriction is not unduly enforced upon people who have already shown their good intentions by meeting the criteria demanded of them in their performance.

Amendment No. 2 was put forward by the Hon. Member for Oxford, and amendment No. 3 by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie). They have been grouped for debate. These amendments seek to ensure that these young people will be guaranteed the ability to practise their profession, that no impediment will be placed to prevent them from carrying out their profession because of some restriction or reluctance at the provincial level to provide them with a billing number. In this amendment we are asking that they be given the chance to prove themselves. I am sure the Government understands the worthiness of that argument.

● (1210)

I listened to the Minister in committee and I listened to her here this morning. The willingness which the Government exhibited in committee to accept amendments to improve the