

Medicare

my hon. friend from Kamloops in support of the amendment.

In my opinion the minister himself should have amended subclause (f) which should never have been presented in the first place. Later on I will have something to say about this subclause. It should never have been presented in that form for it reads:

—a person lawfully entitled to practice medicine in the place in which such practice is carried on by him.

We have not built boundaries or fences around medical practitioners. Medical practitioners have patients from all over the country who sometimes come to them from as much as 100 miles away. They travel that far to a doctor because they have faith and confidence in him. Sometimes they will choose a doctor located several miles away from the doctor nearest to them because they have confidence in that doctor. And yet the minister defines the location as "the place in which such practice is carried on by him". This subclause does not make any sense, and the minister should not have presented it at all.

As I said at the outset of my remarks it is my opinion that in an examination of a bill of this nature ordinary considerations should not prevail.

Consequently, it seems to me that the splitting of hairs over whether or not the amendment enlarges the scope of the bill should not take place. As has been pointed out by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson), the minister assured the house that all we needed to do was give second reading to the bill after which he would give consideration to any changes which might have been suggested by the opposition in committee. The minister is very eloquent, and I give him credit for it, although sometimes he is reticent. I do not always appreciate his remarks but generally speaking I do. I think he is splitting hairs. He has split hairs ever since we started to study the bill in committee. He never stopped doing it, and he is still at it.

Mr. Speaker, may I suggest with the greatest respect that when you make your decision you should be governed by little more than the humanitarian considerations which you generally apply to most of the decisions you make. In this case you should give consideration to the humanitarian aspect of the amendment.

When we return to the consideration of sub-clause (f), I will have a little more to say about it. Now, I would like to say a few words about the question of professional attitude. In

[Mr. Flemming.]

my lifetime I have had a lot to do with professional attitudes. Responsible professionals, whether they be doctors, lawyers, or even politicians, are determined to ensure that what they put down on paper is right, must prevail and should not be subject to any change, any more than were the laws of the Medes and Persians according to the Holy Writ. This is what we are facing now. The minister is determined not to consider any changes. I am afraid he had this determination before I started my remarks, but I still hope he might be swayed by them. I think he should accept the amendment we propose. Let us even suppose that it does involve some technical implications which might be a little out of the ordinary, but I repeat my words that this is not an ordinary bill. This is one of the most important bills that has ever come before the parliament of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding my remarks I wish to say that I hope you will make your ruling—in spite of the fact that you are in a difficult position—on the basis of the fact that ordinary considerations should not prevail with regard to this amendment but should be transcended by the humanitarian aspect involved.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, there are a few things left to be said but not too many. I think this is a tremendously important issue. Not only is the issue itself important but also the fact that we are driven, by the obstinacy of the minister, to throw ourselves at your feet. You are now in the position of a court of appeal. The old practice which prevailed in the house whereby decisions of this kind were, in the final analysis, decided by the house has now yielded to the practice which we are at present following. I quite agree with what the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) said regarding the difficulties involved in such a procedure but I suggest that you, Mr. Speaker, are in the position of a court of appeal beyond which we cannot go in arguing this particular issue.

The hon. member for Victoria-Carleton (Mr. Flemming) said that this was not an ordinary bill. I might add that this extraordinary bill has been piloted through the house by an extraordinary minister who has refused to give reasonable consideration to suggestions put forward by hon. members.

With reference to the fact that this bill deals with matters of health, hon. members