

discuss the whole question of how best to deliver health care services to the people of Canada.

We have heard a lot in this House about federal-provincial co-operation and about how the consultative process works. We have heard very often in this House about the consultative process at work. That is co-operative federalism, my hon. friend from Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) tells me. We in this corner of the House support that concept. That is the nature of confederation; it is getting together and agreeing among ourselves. That is the way we govern ourselves in this country. There can be no other way. When one party acts in a high-handed manner and makes decisions which place the second party to the relationship in a bind, what results is confusion and conclusions are reached off the cuff which interfere, in this case, with the proper delivery of health care.

● (1530)

I should like to take a few moments to deal with the situation in one province, the province of Manitoba, which believes that Bill C-68 is an insult because of the lack of consultation. Manitoba believes the bill to be fatuous and unnecessary because of the existence of the government's anti-inflation program. Surely the anti-inflation program ought to handle the problem which hon. members opposite are trying to solve by means of this draconian measure, Bill C-68.

In Ontario, as the minister well knows, we find decisions being made by the Tory government and by the minister of health of that province, Mr. Miller, who is going about the province trying to tighten up the health services in response to the threats implied in Bill C-68. We see headlines in the newspapers such as "Civic vows to fight cutback", "Exodus by top psychiatrists is seen after health care cuts", "Cutbacks worry mental health officials". Then we find Mr. Miller saying that for the time being there are to be no further hospital closings. Nevertheless, he held out the prospect that there might be more closures next year.

All this should concern us here because we have a responsibility to make sure that Canadians receive proper health care services. The actions of Mr. Miller have served only to estrange the community. They are resulting in high unemployment among workers where hospitals have been closed or beds eliminated. This is no way of dealing with any escalation in hospital medicare costs. The federal government stands condemned because by its actions it is encouraging the provinces to undertake these harum-scarum closures.

What is the government doing in the field of preventive medicine? What is it doing in the areas for which it has a responsibility for providing leadership—for example, in the area of industrial safety? I want to quote from a speech made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) to the Mining Association of Canada on Wednesday, February 25, 1976. In that speech he had this to say about industrial safety particularly in the mines:

We could, justifiably, improve mine safety. Our record is not good. According to a study by Labour Canada, there are more man-days lost through work-related injuries than through strikes. As well, on an all-industry basis, the number of fatal accidents as a percentage of the labour force has not only increased but is significantly higher—

#### *Medical Care Act*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order. The hon. member is straying from the subject, which is an act to amend the Medical Care Act. Perhaps he could confine his remarks to the subject of the bill.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** With all due respect, Madam Speaker, I am thinking of what the minister himself said in the speech in this House on this particular amendment.

**Mr. Lalonde:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that I have not spoken in this House on the amendment.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** I should have said I was thinking of what the minister had to say on the motion, Madam Speaker, not on the amendment. In the course of his speech, the hon. gentleman stated:

On an all-industry basis, the number of fatal accidents as a percentage of the labour force has not only increased but is significantly higher—1.6 per 1,000 employees in 1974—than the all-industry average which is less than 0.2 per 1,000 employees. It has also been shown that about 85 per cent of these accidents result from human error.

If the government is so interested in controlling the cost of medicare, it should obviously be embarking on a program of industrial safety. As I say, the government has a direct responsibility for safety in the uranium mines of this country. We have known for a long time that the uranium mines at Elliot Lake have allowed the safety limit to be exceeded, that workers in the mines have been exposed to radiation, dust, and so on, to such an extent as to make conditions hazardous to their health. The government knew this, the provincial health minister knew it, yet they permitted those workers to continue to work in a hazardous environment, with the result that the men came down with silicosis, or in some cases lung cancer.

What I am pointing out, Madam Speaker, is that this resulted in a great burden to the taxpayer. It seems to me that members who sit on the other side have no excuse. They have done nothing about industrial safety in the mines over which the government has jurisdiction. Instead, they bring forward a bill such as we now have before us and say, in effect, "You fellows will have to cope as best you can."

The amendment which my hon. friend has put forward proposing a six months' hoist is a good idea. It will allow a cooling-off period during which the provincial and federal health ministers can meet once again in a spirit of co-operation, in a spirit of seeking a compromise which will allow for the better protection of the health of Canadians. Hiding behind this bill reducing federal participation in increased medicare costs amounts to an avoidance of the major issue. The government is failing to live up to its responsibility. The minister ought to take our advice and approach the provincial health ministers once again in an effort to arrive at a better solution to the problem. As I say, even in the area where the government has jurisdiction, namely, the uranium mines, it has failed to live up to its responsibility.

● (1540)

Even in the area of workers who work for the federal government, according to the latest report of the public service, 1974-75, there were 22,218 accidents, with a direct cost of over \$7 million, not including the cost to medicare.