

Dominion-Provincial Relations

minister of that province the right to set up his taxation system on the basis that this bill would be passed.

The most important of the joint programs covered by this bill is, naturally, hospital insurance, since clause 6 of the bill provides for a tax abatement of up to 14 points on personal income tax with respect to the hospital insurance and diagnostic services program. Then we have four points in the case of special welfare programs, and the number of points is reduced in the other programs. It will be interesting to see which provinces take on the hospital insurance program on their own. Some people have expressed the thought, "Oh, the provinces are going to be able to go on their own. They are going to be able to develop their programs as they see fit". This is part of the propaganda that was put out, that this was the great liberty; that this was removing shackles from the provinces. In so far as hospital insurance is concerned and a number of these other programs that have been in force for some time, the people have become used to them and I doubt very much if any province will be able to do much about changing over; certainly not with respect to the major programs under this bill. There will be no great freedom, except that there may arise certain local peculiarities after 1970, for instance, in the case of the hospital insurance program. I do not think the minister would dare pretend for one moment that in so far as hospital insurance is concerned there is going to be one change in any province up to 1970, because that is not provided for under clause 3.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, we must recognize that the provinces have had the right to enter into these areas. It is going to be very interesting—and the government must contemplate this with some degree of apprehension, I think—to see what will happen in the field of medicare. I give this as a word of warning to the Liberals because some of their people seem to be agitating a great deal for it. In the field of medicare the province of Alberta has a program, the province of Saskatchewan has a program, and they are quite different. British Columbia has introduced a program which is a modification of the Alberta program, and we hear that the province of Ontario also has intentions in this regard. There may be some variations in degree, but in respect of those provinces having instituted programs of medicare and having had them in operation for a number of years, I will be the most surprised man in the world if the federal government is

[Mr. Lambert.]

able to come along and impose upon them a uniform medicare program—unless, of course, the carrot of financial inducement is so great that no province could resist it; but I would say that under those circumstances it would be a financially improvident program from the point of view of the government of Canada.

Therefore I believe that this bill does not at the present time increase the field of activity of any of the provinces. It does not detract from their jurisdiction; it does not detract from the jurisdiction of the government of Canada, because this bill does not amend the constitution.

In so far as the 17 programs that are included in this bill are concerned, I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, and to members of this house, that other than those under schedule II there is precious little change until comes the time to renegotiate, either in 1967 in the case of certain programs or 1970 in the case of the major ones. And this would have happened anyway. If I may use this phrase, Mr. Speaker, "plus ça change plus c'est la même chose"—there has not been any great change whatsoever.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. gentleman would allow me to ask him a question.

Mr. Lambert: I will accept the minister's question at the end of my remarks. This is the point I wish to make and leave with the house. The bill does accomplish certain things. It gives the provinces the right to sign certain supplementary agreements, and if they do so and the agreement is satisfactory to the government of Canada, there will be certain financial adjustments; but no province will be better off as a result of it. There may be some administrative effects. Certainly the provincial government will administer the program; but there are a number of these programs where federal administration is at a minimum already.

I would like to know what benefit is going to accrue to the service of the government of Canada as the result of this bill. Is there a supervisory staff that has been involved in checking up with the provinces? Is this going to mean that we will have to do away with that staff? Shall we dispense with them? Is there going to be a saving in the administrative costs of, say the Department of National Health and Welfare, the Department of Labour, the Department of Forestry or the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources? There will be such a saving, to