

*Health Insurance*

welfare of the people of this country. I think that the discussion throughout this debate indicates the merits of this proposal, a proposal first put forward by the Prime Minister of Canada. Premier Frost in speaking of his plan said that it comes within the four corners of the proposal made by the federal government.

I recognize, of course, that some hon. members thought they found some shortcomings in the bill. Most of the discussion in this particular has concentrated on two features. The first of these was the insistence that we have at least six provinces. In this regard I can only repeat what I have said a number of times in this house, that that condition is a very necessary one if we are going to have a nation-wide system. I am satisfied that if we had not that provision we would not today have had five provinces signify their acceptance. From negotiations that are under way at this time between the federal government and at least two provincial governments, I know that this is a very important condition to retain in the bill and it is for that reason we opposed the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre which we voted down a few moments ago.

The other question raised by those who found some inadequacy in the bill related to the inclusion of tuberculosis and mental hospitals. The reason I refer to this is because I think it is unfortunate to give the impression that a line is to be drawn in the coverage provided by this bill between those who suffer from tuberculosis and mental illness and those who suffer from other illnesses and who will be covered by this bill. No attempt is being made to discriminate against tubercular patients and those who suffer from mental illness. As I have indicated, so far as the federal government is concerned we will continue under the national health program to provide the largest single grant, which is for mental health and we shall continue to do what we are now doing to assist the provinces in their work of trying to carry on programs of prevention and treatment in the matter of mental illness.

As I indicated the other night, the great development that is taking place now is to provide psychiatric units in general hospitals. Right here in the city of Ottawa two of the large general hospitals have psychiatric units. The cost of the equipment for these two units has been provided for by the federal government under the national health program in addition to the salaries of all the individuals employed in those units. That is also true of the psychiatric units that have come into being since the national health program was announced in 1948.

[Mr. Martin.]

It is not true that little attention is being paid to those who suffer from mental illness but the reason they are excluded under this bill is that what we are seeking to do is to provide financial assistance, not to the provinces to carry on their normal accepted responsibilities but to help individuals in meeting their individual hospital costs. Any individual suffering from tuberculosis or mental illness in a general hospital where he has to pay his own costs is covered by this bill; but individuals who are in provincial institutions paid for, as the provinces admit, to the extent of about 90 per cent by them and by the municipalities, will not be covered by this bill for the simple reason that this bill is designed to assist individuals in their individual hospital problems and not to subsidize provinces which are receiving assistance in other ways from the federal government.

**Mr. Nicholson:** Very little assistance.

**Mr. Martin:** My hon. friend says very little; the assistance provided by this measure alone amounts to some \$200 million annually.

**Mr. Nicholson:** A very small percentage.

**Mr. Martin:** It was not our purpose by this legislation to subsidize the provinces which are already receiving assistance from the federal government through other channels; but whether or not they are receiving other assistance there can be no justification for imposing upon a hospital insurance bill the responsibility for paying public moneys to the provinces for responsibilities which they rightly recognize.

The moment an individual has to pay for treatment in a general hospital he will be covered by this bill for any kind of illness, including tuberculosis or mental illness. The fact that we are right in this is seen in the case of Saskatchewan and in the case of British Columbia and in the case of any other country but one that I can call to mind. In Saskatchewan they have a hospital insurance scheme and they have one in British Columbia. In the case of Saskatchewan the cost of the scheme is borne in the main by premiums paid by individuals.

**An hon. Member:** Half.

**Mr. Martin:** No, a little over half. But that only covers individuals who are treated for illnesses other than tuberculosis and mental illness. Those two illnesses are adequately treated in Saskatchewan and I am not suggesting that they are not. However, they are provided for out of the consolidated fund of the province, in a separate account, being precisely what we are going to do