

Medical Care Act

As a result of negotiations, doctors have now settled, as I have already mentioned, for an 8.1 per cent increase, which is well within the Anti-Inflation Board guidelines. Funds for new nursing beds have been frozen; no new nursing beds are going ahead. Any commitments that were made prior to this stand are being honoured. With the closing of the hospitals already announced it should be pointed out that there will still be a surplus of 3,000 beds in the province of Ontario. Ontario's health budget for 1976 will be \$3.4 billion, or \$400 per person.

We know there are a great many ways to control health costs, and one is to make our health care system more efficient. I appreciate the undertaking of our minister that greater emphasis will be placed on reducing health hazards in the environment and increasing health awareness among Canadians. If we are going to become more healthy and save untold millions of dollars, then we had better stand up, be counted, and be ready to bite the bullet. The minister has pointed out, and rightly so, that we must exercise more, and smoke and drink less. If I had my way, I would ban the latter two activities entirely—

Some hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Darling: —though I realize I am slightly biased there. In addition, we should eat more wisely, in other words less, and I am one who is as guilty, if not more so, as the next person.

Mr. Symes: Let us put up prices in the restaurant.

Mr. Darling: I see a lot of the saintly people to my left eating there, and even eating in the cafeteria.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Don't look at me.

Mr. Darling: I am not looking at the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). As a general insurance agent I have some knowledge of the great increase in premiums for automobile insurance policies, in spite of the fact that since my election to parliament I have not been active in this business. Nevertheless, I still receive letters and hear complaints about the high cost of automobile insurance.

Statistics inform us that traffic accidents are the second most prevalent cause of early death next to heart disease. In 1971, according to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde), figures show that accidents cost us 250,000 years of potential life. Human factors are blamed for 80 per cent of traffic deaths, and these factors include drunken and impaired drivers, speeding, carelessness, failure to use seat belts and, in all probability, failure to use just plain common sense. There were 223,777 injuries on our highways in 1973.

The tremendous cost of related medical and hospital care for victims of highway accidents is staggering, Madam Speaker. Traffic accidents cost Canadians well over \$2 billion a year, including cost of hospital care and treatment for accident victims who require over two million days of hospitalization. Such hospitalization is estimated to cost this country at least \$200 million a year. Medical care costs amount to approximately another \$100 million, and these figures do not include legal expenses, public liability, prop-

[Mr. Darling.]

erty damage, loss of time from work, and the cost of permanent disability.

It might be a good time, Madam Speaker, to put in a plug for the wearing of seat belts, which I know is distasteful to a great many automobile drivers in my own province of Ontario where seat belt legislation has just come into force. Again speaking as an insurance agent I am well aware that wearing of seat belts does save lives as well as huge sums of money.

Australia has implemented seat belt legislation over the past three years. In its first full year of enforcement there was a reduction in fatal motor vehicle accidents of 25 per cent. A similar situation exists in France. There statistics reveal that their new compulsory seat belt legislation saved 1,200 lives in 1974.

Another staggering statistic is the great number of industrial accidents and fatalities. In 1974, 1,415 workers were killed on the job. The average over the past 10 years is 1,076. One out of 20 workers had a disabling injury in 1974, there being a total of 473,000 injuries. Industrial accidents were estimated to cost the United States \$32.4 billion a year. I am sure our losses would be in the same ratio, which would mean about \$3 billion a year. This certainly gives us food for thought. Something must be done to reduce these accidents. We must also consider this in terms of lost production, in human suffering, and in medical and hospital care.

● (2110)

We are told by experts in the field that for every dollar spent on medical research today there is a savings of \$20 in health costs within ten years. I trust, therefore, that the minister will reconsider reducing the medical research budget by too much.

The bill proposes to limit the government's increased participation in medicare to 13 per cent next year, 10.5 per cent the following year, and 8 per cent in subsequent years. This will certainly be a great burden on the provinces and will be especially hard on those provinces which do not have the wealth and taxing revenues of a province like Ontario, British Columbia, and those blue-eyed Arab sheiks in Alberta.

Mr. Towers: Take it easy now.

Mr. Darling: That's O.K., my hon. friend from Red Deer.

Our minister of health in Ontario was quoted some while back in this regard. In fact I found the quotation at page 10411 of *Hansard* and I think it bears repeating. He said:

If I have ever seen any example of unilateral decision making without consultation with the provinces that is it. We have been negotiating patiently for four years with the federal government to get a means of sharing health care costs that would allow the provinces to use their own discretion and to set their own priorities, instead of sharing on only those most costly services, the hospital and the physician. In the face of that, without any further consultation, they unilaterally set guidelines. They started the plan; it has got out of control. They have unilaterally limited the amount they will put into it. I don't know how we will live within it.

Other provincial health ministers have voiced a similar opinion.

On July 10 this past year the Canadian Medical Association declared: