

*Medicare*

to keep an open mind politically and decide here and now what should be done.

I think that the four paragraphs contained in this amendment are eminently sound on every count. I also maintain that many fair-minded members in all parties in this house will agree with the basic principle which applies to the rule of law under our constitution in Canada. We have chaos unless we have a constitution in a democratic society, and our democratic society makes no bones about the fact that we have given the provinces the sole right to decide matters of health and welfare. The section in the British North America Act makes this provision is only too well known and I am not going to remind members of it. There it is clearly laid down that health and welfare will be the sole responsibility of the provinces involved.

To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, all governments have over the years recognized this basic principle in our constitution. There is a clause in this bill which in its very wording purports to honour this principle. In clause 3 of the bill it says that the contribution is payable, pursuant to a medical care insurance plan of the province. When Bill C-227 becomes law, will it not completely negate the right of any province to have its own medical care plan? Right from the start, under our constitution the bill would be null and void if we follow the principle that the provinces have the right to legislate and administer everything connected with health and welfare. The fact that the federal government has taken on the responsibility for collecting taxes in no way gives it the right to dictate to the provinces their almost inalienable right under the constitution. To hide behind double talk is to set a dangerous precedent in this and in other pieces of legislation. What we cannot do openly, under the constitution, we should not be able to do with a financial stick; and that is what this measure purports to be.

● (4:40 p.m.)

I support the principle of medical care for all. I believe in social justice, but I do not believe in state manipulation of every corner of my life. I am not a socialist, but I do believe in social justice. I think the provinces are quite capable of giving social justice under medicare, provided they have the money to pay for the service. The fact is that because the dominion government collects taxes, it has no right to dictate to the provinces in those fields where they have an inalienable right under the constitution. In

my personal opinion the whole bill violates that principle. But I realize perfectly well that if you bury this bill, as some hon. members suggest, we may well delay medical care for years. That is true of course.

I beg the government to look at the real thing we are trying to do, which is to provide medical care for those who need it most, and if possible to do that within the framework of our constitution. Otherwise, the government essentially is saying that the provinces are not capable of handling those household affairs which the Fathers of Confederation in their wisdom allowed them to settle for themselves.

This is where we part company with our friends on the left, because they are cynical enough to say that nobody has the right to run his own affairs. They say that that can only be done by an omniscient, all powerful government. If one carried socialism to its extreme, this entails a one party government, which means that the people have no voice.

We have four parts to our amendment, the first part of which says that no legislation will be satisfactory unless it—

—(a) secures co-operation of the governments of the provinces of Canada.

One wonders why we have not had any consensus from the provinces. We do not expect them to abandon their rights, do we? Unless I am wrong in my guess at least two of Canada's great provinces will not knuckle down. They saw long ago the financial stake, which is very poorly disguised in words. Is this a question of getting out? I do not know. I am not going to impute bad faith to the government, saying that they are trying to welch.

I say that if we are going to get the kind of medical care we want to see, and that the people of Alberta want to see—and even though the system in Alberta is not yet perfect, it is not widely hated—the house must accept the amendment of this party. In Alberta they do not use the language I heard the last speaker use. One would think that around here there was a declaration of war. I will not repeat, in my speech, that kind of language. We have heard about betrayal, emasculation, and things like that. This is not necessary. Instead, let us offer reasoned arguments.

I say that this amendment is correct, because underlying all principles of law in Canada is the principle that Canada must be ruled according to its constitution. I shall