

Honourable senators, this, then, is the program with which we are dealing tonight. It marks the inauguration of a new era for our people. It ensures that no resident of this land will be deprived for the lack of ability to meet the costs, of the fruits of scientific progress in the medical field so ably provided by Canadian physicians. It will remove the barrier so frequently posed by the economics of an evermore complex society, to essential medical services. Although it is anticipated that provincial programs may differ one from the other in some respects, the fact that all participating provinces will include provisions designed to ensure the portability of benefits, that is, the right to carry entitlement from one part of Canada to another, will guarantee the national character of the program.

The legislation now before you, honourable senators, incorporates the main recommendations of the Hall Royal Commission. This was a commission set up by the official Opposition when it formed the government of the country. The Hall Commission called for a comprehensive, universal, publicly-administered, prepaid medical insurance scheme. These are precisely the principles set out in this bill.

I would now ask honourable senators to take the very important step of approving the principles of medical care insurance. In closing, I should like to express once more the privilege which I feel to have been mine tonight in having the opportunity to bring to this chamber, as one of my first acts, this statute designed for the welfare of all our people.

Hon. M. Wallace McCutcheon: Honourable senators, before I say a few words this evening, may I ask the sponsor of the bill (Hon. Mr. Macnaughton) whether, as and when the bill receives second reading, it will be referred to a committee?

Hon. Mr. Macnaughton: I feel quite sure, honourable senators, that this is the proper thing to do, and that the bill will be referred to a committee if the house so desires.

Hon. Mr. McCutcheon: Thank you very much.

Honourable senators, in his closing remarks, Senator Macnaughton referred to the fact that this bill carried out the major recommendations of the Hall Royal Commission on Health Services. One might question whether that was really the case, because while the public

attention was captured by the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Health Services regarding physicians' care, that was only one of a number of recommendations made by the commission. I had the honour to be a member of that commission, but I resigned from it when I was summoned to this place on August 19, 1962. I did not participate in its deliberations and in the preparation of the report, and as to some of its recommendations my views are very well known.

In its terms of reference, the commission was instructed to establish priorities, and that of course is the very thing that the commission failed to do and that the Government is today failing to do. The commission made many detailed recommendations, and it said we must push on, go along the road with them all at the same time. It had estimates of the shortages of medical and para-medical personnel, dental personnel, which have proven to be low. It had estimates as to the cost of providing educational and other facilities needed for training these personnel, which have proven to be low. So far the Government has merely paid lip service to those very important recommendations in the educational field to provide the people to do the job that is proposed this evening and the much wider job that the sponsor of the bill suggested.

The sponsor said that we put flexibility into it, and he referred to the amendment, which as he repeated twice, was made in the House of Commons on the recommendation of the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Of course that is quite true. But the amendment was made only after four or five days of debate, during which, far from providing flexibility in the bill, the Minister of National Health and Welfare was willing to withdraw certain physicians' services from the bill as his solution of the problem which was properly put before him.

A number of my colleagues will be speaking on this bill, and in many respects they will speak with more authority than I will. We know now that the bill will be going to a committee, so that certain sections, the effect of which frankly I do not understand, will be explained there. So, I simply want to make a few general remarks.

I regard this bill as essentially a further unwarranted intrusion by the federal Government into fields of provincial jurisdiction. If the federal Government had said, we will contribute to the cost of medicare plans—to use that term—as developed by each province,