

Medicare

Mr. Caouette: Conservatives in Manitoba, Conservatives in Quebec, as mentioned by the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

However, Mr. Chairman, if the federal government amended Bill No. C-227 so that the provinces—Quebec, Manitoba, New Brunswick, in short, any province—may accept or pass a plan which suits them, and said: We pay 40, 50 or 60 per cent of the total cost of your medical insurance plan, then it would respect the autonomy of the province, whichever it might be. Such is not the case with this Bill No. C-227 which dictates a policy to all the provinces, emphasizing four points: The coverage of such plan must be complete. The plan must cover all the services rendered by medical practitioners of course.

Second, that the program be sponsored by the provincial government, but passed and approved by the federal government.

Third, that benefits be transferable from one province to another, which is very good. A family insured in Quebec or in Vancouver, in Alberta or in Saskatchewan, should be insured anywhere in Canada.

Fourth, that all residents of a province be eligible; we also agree with that.

Mr. Chairman, we do not agree, however, that the federal government should dictate to the provinces the manner in which they should set up their own medical insurance plans. It is not up to Ottawa to decide that. Ottawa should help the provinces, but they should stop confusing them. We are proposing the following solution.

We have, at the present time, some economists among the Liberals who now form the government. A solution should be sought to rid the provinces of Ottawa. The federal government should not be an obstacle, a hindrance and it should not hamper the provincial administration. Then, we would see a greater national unity, more comprehension between eastern and western Canada or between the east, west and central area of Canada than at the present time.

Mr. Chairman, we receive grievances and representations from Canadian oculists and podiatrists who complain that Bill No. C-227 forbids the recognition of their profession and forbids them to practise their profession or use their skills in this field. Optometrists, opticians or podiatrists, however, all took the same classical course as the hon. member for [Mr. Teillet.]

Gatineau; generally speaking, they have the same education as medical practitioners. We have physicians who are allowed to examine the eyes, the whole body of a person, whether it be a federal or a provincial member of parliament who, according to the present program, will receive remuneration. They will say: his eyesight is failing because he has diabetes, because he has a kidney ailment; his eyesight is failing because he is weakening.

Mr. Chairman, I think the optometrists and the Optometrists Association should call the attention of the government to the fact that they should be given recognition as an organized group, made up of people who serve society. Thus we could allow some people to benefit by this medical care program, like others who have the same training.

Mr. Chairman, I have nothing against medical practitioners, far from it. We call for them as soon as we are ill. However, as far as oculists and podiatrists are concerned, I believe the bill should recognize the two different professions in our country.

Mr. Chairman, the amendment introduced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) stipulates:

● (8:50 p.m.)

[*English*]

That paragraph (d) of clause 2 of Bill C-227 be amended by inserting therein, immediately after the word 'required' in line 19, the following words: "and services rendered by optometrists"—

I would then add the word "podiatrist". It then states:

"—which, when rendered by a medical practitioner, would be considered as insured services."

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chairman, this amendment seems perfectly logical to me and I support it, because I feel that if we leave out the optometrists—

[*English*]

Mr. Rynard: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Caouette: "Yeah, yeah" what?

Mr. Rynard: You are on the right track. That is what I was thinking.

Mr. Caouette: I just heard "yeah, yeah". I thought you were talking to me but you were apparently talking behind the curtain.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lewis: What do you say in French?