

Medicare

classified as indigent. These people very definitely need help. The remaining 50 per cent are in the class that is in between; they are neither self-supporting nor can they be classified as indigent. However, I feel that they too should be given the security of protection against sudden illness so that if they do take sick they will be assured that they will receive adequate medical attention at no cost to themselves.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, approximately 70 per cent of the people of our province do need medicare right now because only 30 per cent are totally self-supporting. This is the situation in a province which cannot afford to expend the \$1.5 million or \$2 million which will be required to provide medical services to all our people. I suggest that the 30 per cent who are self-supporting would be perfectly satisfied to go along with any plan which will provide medicare to those who cannot afford it themselves. So if the federal government would give us the \$1.5 million or \$2 million which would ordinarily be appropriated for medicare purposes in our province, we would insure those people who need insurance.

As a matter of fact, we now have a plan in operation in our province which is working out very successfully. People in receipt of old age assistance, people in receipt of widows' allowances and those in receipt of welfare assistance of this nature are provided by our government with medicare. What the government does is enrol them in the Blue Cross and Blue Shield, so that if they are sick they benefit from these plans.

I suggest that this scheme is perhaps a much more reasonable approach than insisting that out of our own revenues we provide \$1.5 million or \$2 million to help give medicare to some people who actually do not need it at the present time because their incomes are such that they can take care of their medical expenses as they arise. Therefore I submit that at the present time a compulsory medicare plan is neither necessary nor in fact desirable in our province by reason of its fiscal position and the fact that we have not the facilities with which to provide medical services for all our people.

• (2:50 p.m.)

I suggest that we institute a combination of government and private plans whereby government funds will be made available to the province to provide for those in need and other plans will still be available through insurance companies and so on to those who

are financially able to pay their own way. At the present time 47 per cent of our people are enrolled in plans of their own either privately or through employer-employee groups. Such a plan as this would permit our province, which is of course concerned with the ultimate cost of a plan such as the present one, to make its own choice, and I think it is very important that the provinces should be permitted to do so.

The minister said yesterday in connection with subclause (d) of our amendment which states that the plan should immediately provide for those persons who are unable for financial reasons to provide medical services for themselves, and I quote him from page 8625 of *Hansard*:

I might say that this house has already taken action this session through the Canada Assistance Plan to provide for this very item.

That is not exactly correct, Mr. Speaker. The Canada Assistance Plan does not provide for all of those who for financial reasons are unable to provide for themselves. The plan that we have inaugurated in Prince Edward Island does so because it covers those who are in receipt of widows' allowances, disability pensions or old age assistance. It does not provide yet for those who are in receipt of old age security, but we in our province are only too anxious to see funds made available for this category of people. However, a goodly number of people in our province are already covered—those in receipt of Old Age Assistance, etc.—and I think they amount to approximately 10 per cent of our population. I therefore suggest to the minister very earnestly that the plan I have outlined, or something very similar to it, would for the time being give adequate protection to those who actually need it. Perhaps as time evolves and, as we hope, we become richer, our government will be able to provide complete coverage.

[Translation]

Mr. J.-A. Mongrain (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, on second reading of Bill No. C-227, an act to authorize the payment of contributions by Canada toward the cost of insured medical care services incurred by provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans, I would like to make a short and modest contribution.

If I sat here as a Liberal member, Mr. Speaker, needless to say that I would rise immediately to support that bill with the vigorous partisanship which allegiance to a