

Medicare

I come from the province of Saskatchewan, which has established a medical care plan, and I must say in all fairness that this plan works. However, many problems had to be faced in the beginning, because the plan was put into effect too hastily and because there was a lack of competent doctors and medical people. I believe we must be careful not to make the same mistakes in instituting a federal medical care plan, and we must ensure complete acceptance from the doctors, as well as complete co-operation of all the Canadian provinces.

Mr. Pennell: It is seven o'clock, Mr. Speaker. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member but if it is agreeable to the house I suggest we suspend debate until eight o'clock this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret): Is it agreed that we suspend the sitting until eight o'clock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Sitting suspended.

SITTING RESUMED

The house resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Watson (Assiniboia): Before we adjourned for dinner, Mr. Speaker, I was mentioning a few of the problems we had in Saskatchewan before the plan in that province was implemented. As I mentioned also, we now have a workable plan in that province and I believe everyone is proud of it. I do want to point out, in so far as the legislation before us is concerned, that the government should take a good look at the problems we had there before implementing this legislation.

One of the first problems I see in connection with this bill is the principle of compulsion. This was one of the big objections to the provincial scheme; but it is now compulsory and everyone in the province has to have it. If we are going to have a plan which covers the Dominion, I believe it must be compulsory for everyone in Canada to take part in and to contribute to it. I would much prefer to see a voluntary program, however, because most of the working class people who can actually afford to pay their doctors' bills have taken the precaution of belonging to some prepaid plan.

A federal plan should be set up so that it is completely portable from one province to another. At the present time, when you move

from one province to another you have a long list of complicated documents to fill in, and this is one of the problems that has not been completely solved in Saskatchewan. At the moment, if you want your bills handled with no inconvenience to yourself, and if the doctors are to accept a certain proportion of the bill, you must belong to M.S.I. or some other form of group medical plan. Personally I do not agree with this provision. If a federal plan is implemented, then this must be one of the things omitted from it. In other words, it must be completely universal and none of the prepaid plans should participate in it.

I should like to refer briefly to the amendment which was before the house last week and mention the four points that I feel are very important. The first point in the amendment reads as follows:

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

This is something that we must have, the wholehearted co-operation and support of each and every province. No province should have the right to opt out on such a plan.

Point No. 2 in the amendment reads as follows:

(b) recognizes the principle of voluntary choice by the individual.

Again, it is important that each individual person who seeks medical attention have the privilege of going to the doctor of his choice.

Point No. 3 in the amendment reads as follows:

(c) makes adequate prior provision for sufficient medical research, the training of adequate numbers of doctors and other medical personnel—

Then, the last point in the amendment reads:

(d) immediately provides for those persons who are unable, for financial reasons, to provide medical services for themselves.

I would say that the last two points are very important. If we are going to have a national plan under which every resident of Canada who needs medical attention can secure that attention, we must have research and we must have the facilities to train both men and women who will be entering the medical profession. I feel that possibly the most important point of all is the last one, which refers to immediate provision for those people who are unable, for financial reasons, to provide medical services for themselves. These are the people of Canada with whom we must be concerned. These are not just the underprivileged people of Canada but also