

Medicare

profession, alternatives are set out. The desirable alternative of course from the profession's point of view is inclusion. I must look at this one letter, however. There has been a great deal of correspondence. In any discussion with individual optometrists that I have had, they have accepted the idea that the proposal is a workable solution.

Mr. Knowles: But the minister will table sufficient documents so that we can see what the view of those optometrists is, and whether it is the view of individual optometrists or the view of the association.

Mr. MacEachen: The official view of the profession is, of course, that the profession should be included. I would not want to misrepresent that in any way.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, that is the point I wanted to make, because the minister said on November 29, as recorded on page 10540 of *Hansard*, that giving the provinces the right to exclude eye refractions—

—is not the most desirable move from the point of view of the optometric profession, but I have had letters from members of the profession saying that this would be an acceptable solution for them.

By those words the minister created the impression that spokesmen for the profession had indicated this would be acceptable. I am sure other hon. members are in the same position I am, receiving a host of telegrams from all over the country from coast to coast.

Mr. Knowles: In both languages.

Mr. Fulton: In both languages; my telegrams included one from the president of the British Columbia Optometric Association, and one from the president of the Canadian Association of Optometrists. Both telegrams stated that what the minister had said was contrary to the views of the association. Perhaps I might read this telegram from the president of the Canadian Association of Optometrists:

Exclusion of eye examination from Bill C-227 as prepared by health minister MacEachen is not in public interest and Canadian Association of Optometrists reiterates its position in urging government to amend bill to include optometric services which are the same as those performed by ophthalmologists.

It is therefore clear that the views of spokesmen for the optometric profession, including those from the national association and others from coast to coast in Canada, are contrary to those of the minister.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

Of course, Mr. Chairman, as we pointed out yesterday, the minister's proposal is a retrograde step, a step of the most extraordinary illogicality. The minister says, here we have a bill to give comprehensive medicare coverage on a prepaid insurance basis and then says we are going to remove from the bill what is undisputedly an essential medical care service.

I suggest to the minister if he gives the provinces the option to exclude optometric care, and if he does not include other services which are on occasion performed by people who are not qualified medical doctors but who are nevertheless persons providing medical services, he is being not only illogical, but inconsistent with the assurances given by the Prime Minister in 1965 when he outlined to the provinces the scope of the coverage of this bill.

On July 19, the Prime Minister said this to the provinces at the conference, as set out in the release of July 20, 1965:

I said that the plan should offer all services provided by physicians, both general practitioners and specialists. In practice, there probably would be 2 exceptions to this:

(a) services for which there is entitlement under other federal or provincial legislation, such as the hospital insurance and diagnostic services act and Workmen's Compensation.

(b) the certain limited types of services might be excluded. I have in mind, for example, cosmetic surgery unless it is required as a medical necessity.

The Prime Minister went on:

Physicians' services, apart from such special exclusion, seem to us to be the minimum scope of benefits which would qualify as medicare.

The Prime Minister then indicated that the only type of medical exclusion contemplated—or the only type of medical service which might be excluded—was cosmetic surgery. There is no hint that optometric services, even though performed by physicians, would be excluded.

But not only does the minister now stubbornly refuse to extend the definitions of "insured medical services" or "medical practitioner" to include the kind of service, which, though a physician's service, can be performed by others, but he even proposes to exclude other services from the bill.

There is clear evidence that the kinds of services given for instance by chiropractors are also the kind of services given by medical practitioners. Qualified doctors are being provided with a diagram reproducing a chart showing the treatments performed by chiropractors many years ago. Comparing such