

Medicare

Hall Commission, and it has been said that we are now ignoring certain recommendations of that commission. I point out to those hon. members who have suggested this, that many other recommendations of the Hall Commission are not being incorporated in this bill. Of course, the report of the commission is a guide, a very welcome and worth-while one. One cannot speak too highly of the excellent work and research this commission carried out in the field of providing medical services to all Canadians. The Hall Commission is to be highly commended in this respect.

However, Mr. Chairman, in all sincerity and with every respect for those hon. members who have spoken in opposition to the amendment, I would invite them to consider the one feature of the amendment that is so important, namely, that it would provide flexibility. Also, we would be able to bring into the plan the experience of tried and proven organizations. I suggest that the quality of service would thereby be improved. In my opinion, the amendment does not include the threatening factor of insurance companies running loss-leader insurance plans. The provinces may designate that only public authorities or provincial agencies run the plan. This is the decision of the particular province. It may well be that there will be a combination of a public authority with a tried and proven professional organization. The government of a province should have the freedom to make this choice. As the clause now stands, with the retention of the words "public authority" there is taken away from the provinces this essential right.

● (3:20 p.m.)

We need not therefore, be afraid of the ogre of the great insurance company coming into the picture. This can still be controlled at the provincial level. I simply plead with members of the house to support the amendment which, I feel, commends itself.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Chairman, I have not taken part in this debate so far but there are several things which I should like to say in regard to the bill.

First of all, I must say that I cannot support the amendment moved by the hon. member for Simcoe East. I have no doubt that his intentions are the best, but this is a very important matter to us in this group and it is one which goes very deeply indeed into the whole subject of a medicare plan. The clause which we are now discussing has two important ideas in it: the non-profit basis of the

plan and its administration by a public authority. Some of us were very keen to allow the provinces to decide on what should be included in the health services and on other matters having to do with the details of the plan, but the provinces should not be left to decide as to the criteria laid down in the bill. These are certain conditions which the government has laid down and which the provinces must observe if they are to participate in the plan. This is not a matter which should be left to the provinces because we are formulating a Canada-wide scheme. If we are to provide a medicare plan at the lowest possible cost to all Canadians, we have to take into account what the Hall Commission report says about costs.

This Commission discovered in their investigations that it cost the province of Saskatchewan 6 cents out of every \$1 to administer a public non-profit medical scheme. Evidence was given that it cost private insurers about 28 cents out of every \$1 to administer their plans for purposes other than paying benefits. So that if we are to consider the provision of a nation-wide medicare scheme for Canadians, for which they can afford to pay as taxpayers, we have to consider costs. The Hall report has brought forth conclusive evidence to show that only a plan administered publicly by non-profit organizations can reduce the costs.

The hon. member for Portage-Neepawa, for whom I have the greatest respect when it comes to social aims and objectives, has indicated his belief that if we were to insist on the administration of this plan by public non-profit organizations—and this is written into the bill—we would thereby exclude such organizations as co-operatives. This would not be the case because co-operatives do not operate on a profit making basis.

Mr. Enns: May I ask the hon. member a question? Can such an agency be described as a public authority?

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Yes, if it is given such status by the provincial government.

Mr. Enns: That is my point.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Then, it would qualify as a non-profit making agency. If such is not the case, I would be very pleased to be corrected by the minister. But according to my understanding of the bill, a co-operative is a non-profit making organization and can be dealt with as such by the public authority. This cannot be said of