

*Medicare*

• (9:50 p.m.)

[Translation]

**Mr. Maurice Allard (Sherbrooke):** Mr. Speaker, the present bill, namely Bill No. C-227, invites us to improve health conditions and assist the sick. Those two reasons are worthy of praise, all the more so when we know that disease constitutes, for both Canada and Canadians, a loss of time and money.

In 1963, sickness caused a loss of 100 million man-days, that is more than \$1,600 million, or 3.8 per cent of the G.N.P. In comparison with this, industrial strikes do not represent even 1 per cent of the losses caused by sickness.

The provisions of Bill No. C-227 show us how the central government intends to contribute to a provincial medicare plan, that is by paying 50 per cent of the cost if a province satisfies the four following conditions: first, the program must be administered by the state or a non-profit organization; second, it must be universal in character, that is it must apply to at least 90 per cent of the population; third, it must be transferable, and fourth, it must cover all medical expenses.

I am examining these various conditions, Mr. Speaker, and I shall have occasion to come back to them at the end of my speech. But I wonder if these four conditions in themselves justify an intervention by the central government in the field of medicare. I personally feel that the provinces, separately or together, could easily have drawn them up and agreed thereto, especially now that the Canadian provinces meet annually, at a provincial Prime Ministers conference, and in view of the fact that interprovincial co-ordination and co-operation are gaining favour across the country.

It seems as though the central government were good-humouredly playing at Santa Claus several months ahead of time, offering the provinces money and setting conditions as if the provinces were children, backward little girls unable to organize their wardrobe themselves. This, Mr. Speaker, is the continuation of the unrestrained centralization practised by the present government in all fields and, it seems, despite the very eloquent statements made last night, according to press reports, during a celebration closing the conference of the Canadian Liberal party, when that party said: as long as we do not amend the Canadian constitution, we must respect it. This statement made the headlines of several newspapers.

[Mr. Howe (Hamilton South).]

There was also the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) who as it were added, in a sort of speech which he alone can make, in speaking of the Liberal party and of the Liberal government in power: We do not intend to nor must we encroach upon or destroy the powers and the jurisdiction allocated to the provinces under the constitution. A wonderful statement, Mr. Speaker, which was made quite recently, as a matter of fact only last night. There you have the theory, there you have the statement, but today you have a concrete example of this systematic inconsistency because a motion was made for second reading of a bill which goes against the spirit and the letter of the Canadian constitution which allocates to the provinces, solely and exclusively, the fields of insurance and hygiene.

This is why, in this house, since January 18 last, we had the feeling of plunging further into a constitutional chaos in which this government places us continuously. This government refuses to set up a parliamentary committee to review our Canadian constitution. It denies the hon. members of the house and the law-makers of this parliament the right to amend this old text dating back to 1867 in order, it seems, to adapt it—may I call it ten o'clock?

**Mr. Speaker:** I am sorry, but I do not think that the hon. member may call it ten o'clock immediately. However, this is not why I intervene. I simply want to remind him that at the present time we are discussing a bill which deals with establishing medical care in Canada and it seems to me that his speech at the present time is not closely related to the principle of the bill which we are considering at this time. The hon. member may still be making his preliminary remarks and, if such is the case, I invite him to come as soon as possible to the substance of his speech.

**Mr. Allard:** Mr. Speaker, when I close my remarks, this evening or tomorrow, you will find that this is the basis of my argument which is fully related to the substance of this bill and to the debate on medicare.

I simply wanted to point out in the premise—I will come back to that at the end of my remarks—that this legislation is another centralizing, anticonstitutional measure, and those are areas and conditions which should