

Oral Questions

federal Government but which cannot be made operative without provincial participation, to persuade the provincial Government as far as possible to interpret the medicare legislation in a way which is desired by all Canadians. She has obviously failed in some cases. She indicated to the House she was considering whatever measures could be taken.

The reason for the delay is not because the constitutional problem is a difficult one generally. It would be to find ways to redress the situation which would not be challengeable in the courts. That is the difficulty. The Hon. Member knows that the federal Government, under its jurisdiction, cannot legislate in certain areas. The delivery of health systems is one. That is why we need the co-operation of the Provinces. The very law setting up medicare states that. We cannot change it unilaterally in any way which would suit our convenience or that of the New Democratic Party.

INQUIRY RESPECTING DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OPINION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has confirmed rather than denied my interpretation of the events. He is saying that the Department of Justice is trying to figure out what can be done within the Government's legitimate constitutional jurisdiction.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare said to me on March 17 that the Department of Justice was drafting a document. That was over a month and a half ago. When is that document going to be drafted? Also, would the Prime Minister consider having that document placed before the House of Commons before the Minister meets with the provincial health Ministers? The Prime Minister says that the Minister is meeting with the provincial health Ministers. They have not met for 11 months. Last May or June was the last time they met with regard to medicare. That can hardly be called active or intense consultation.

Will the Prime Minister consider tabling a document in this House so that the people of Canada and Members of Parliament concerned about medicare will have a proposal around to which to rally and stimulate public opinion, if indeed the proposal is good enough to deserve that?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I can predict that no proposal made by the Government will ever be good enough to rally the support of the New Democratic Party. That is a foregone conclusion. That is why I do not see any advantage in proceeding in the way the Hon. Member says. The legislation in Alberta is only to take effect next fall. The Minister is exercising her responsibility in ensuring that the ways in which we will try to make medicare operate will be the way the Canadian people want. She is exercising her responsibility to prepare that. It would not help at this stage to table legal opinions.

I repeat, the Constitution is quite clear on what the federal Government cannot do. It cannot legislate on the delivery of health systems. If the Hon. Member doubts that, he can consult his own lawyers. We do not have to table a document

from the Department of Justice to say that. What we are trying to find is a way which will be accommodating to the Provinces and at the same time respect the Constitution and make medicare operable.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, we do not want to know what the federal Government cannot do in terms of health delivery. We want to know what the federal Government proposes to do with regard to what it can do. It is not coming forward with that.

My final question has to do with the need the Prime Minister expresses for provincial agreement. I happen to be convinced that we are not going to get the kind of agreement among provincial Conservative Governments that will be an agreement which will preserve the five basic principles of medicare. Will the Prime Minister consider acting, providing it is within the constitutional jurisdiction of the Government, in a way that did not have the agreement of the Provinces? Will he facilitate the acceptability of that action by being willing to go back on the reductions in established programs financing that took place a year ago, and taking back Bill C-150 which imposed six and five on post-secondary payments? How can he expect the Provinces to agree to anything when he is doing this to them?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is confusing two subjects, post-secondary education and medicare. There was no reduction in the funds put forward for medicare. The Hon. Member knows that. I can give the answer as to why he is dragging a red herring around this discussion. He knows there is no solution without some form of respect for the Constitution. He is proposing that we buy off the Provinces by giving them more money. That is not the approach we intend to take.

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● (1430)

SUPPLY AND SERVICES

FRIGATE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT—DISTRIBUTION OF WORK

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Supply and Services. The Hon. Member for Longueuil has been widely quoted as saying that the selection of the winning consortium is a purely political decision in the case of the Canadian patrol frigates, and if Scan Marine is not picked, he says there may be a political putsch within the Liberal Party. There are many factors which should govern the decision making but I sincerely hope that such political blackmail will not prevail.

Will the Minister confirm that one of the options put forward by Saint John Shipbuilding in their bid is to build two frigates in the Maritimes, two in the St. Lawrence Shipyards,