

*Medicare*

ask the Speaker to consider it in order to determine whether or not it is in order.

[English]

**Hon. D. S. Harkness (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to reiterate all the arguments and criticisms which have been made in respect of this bill and the scheme it envisages; nor do I intend to repeat the arguments made in favour of the reasonable and reasoned amendment put forward by the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) which unfortunately has now been defeated. I do, however, want to register my objection to this bill and the scheme it proposes so far as medicare is concerned.

The argument has been put forward in the house, particularly yesterday by the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson), I believe, that the only principle in the bill before us is that of the federal government making financial contributions to the cost of insured medical services. I submit that this is patently wrong. The four criteria set out in the bill are part of the principle or principles of the bill, and approval of second reading of the bill really means approval by the house of those criteria as well as of the general principle of the federal government making financial contributions toward medical care.

I can conceive of no reason for this argument having been put forward except to try to maintain that those of us who disapprove of this bill and vote against it are not in favour of medical care. The reverse is the situation. I believe that every person in this house and practically everybody in Canada is in favour of a reasonable, practical and good system of medical care which will ensure the highest calibre and most effective type of medical care to all the people of this country. Those of us who disagree with this bill are no less concerned than the members on the government side of the house and others who are in favour of the bill about ensuring the best medical care for the people of this country.

● (5:50 p.m.)

However, most of the provinces are dissatisfied with one or more of the provisions in the bill, and so are the vast majority of the medical fraternity. In these circumstances I do not understand why the government is so insistent on passing the bill at this time, particularly as it is not to go into effect for nearly two years. Instead of trying to push the bill through and to bulldoze the provinces and the medical profession into a scheme

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret).]

which they do not think is sound and of which they do not approve, and in view of the fact that there will be a long interval before this legislation is implemented, why does this government not try to get together with the provinces and the medical association to produce a medicare scheme of which we can all approve?

I do not see any reason at all for the elements of compulsion which exist in the bill. It is quite possible to produce a much better scheme than the one envisaged. For one thing, as has been mentioned here before, optometrists and their services are not included under the provisions of the bill. For another thing, dental care is not included. Personally, I think any really comprehensive system of health insurance should include dental care as well as the ordinary medical services. I think it would be quite possible to produce a medical care insurance system which would retain a place for insurance companies, doctors' associations and others who are already in this field, a scheme which would be more complete than the one which is now proposed and, in particular, one which would meet with greater universal approval and co-operation.

Before this bill gets second reading—I might say I propose to vote against it—I plead with the government that instead of trying to go ahead and push this scheme through they engage in consultation with the provinces, because if they would do so I am sure a much better scheme would result which we would all be happy to support.

**Mr. E. Nasserden (Rosthern):** Mr. Speaker, during the course of this debate some hon. members opposite have been generous in their desire to attribute to members of this party from the province of Saskatchewan characteristics which, to say the least, are indicative of a sick imagination. I think of the usual type of claptrap which we have heard from the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), the leader of the New Democratic Party in this house, and also the contribution made by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Cashin) when he once again sought to justify his adherence to and blind and unwavering support of his party in an eloquent and obvious tribute to the premier of his province for the appointment which brought him to this House of Commons. I was interested in his remarks because once again he found himself compelled to pay a tribute to my leader and to the influence of my leader in this parliament.