

Medicare

office and the Prime Minister have indicated that any province not wanting to accept this plan will not get any contribution and the people in such province, who of course will have to pay taxes, will have to assume the cost of their own plan. Was there not strange solicitude for another province on other occasions when it wanted to opt out of something inasmuch there is no opting out so far as this plan is concerned? The province of Alberta does not happen to be a province that the government wants to curry favour with.

At one time the government was running around saying so much about the opting-out formula being the keystone for the program of co-operative federalism. That has been laid low once and for all, because the provinces of Canada showed their contempt for opting out under the terms proposed by the government. There is only one province for which that provision was designed and with which it was negotiated in secret session. That province availed itself of the opting-out provision.

Would the government be prepared to grant to the province of Alberta, the province of British Columbia and the province of Ontario the option under this bill of running their own plans? The Minister of National Health and Welfare knows very well that under the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act there are variations among the provincial plans.

Mr. MacEachen: There may be under this bill too.

Mr. Lambert: They are very narrow. There are four essential corners and these were the ones to which the provincial governments objected.

Mr. MacEachen: They did not.

Mr. Lambert: Did they not?

Mr. MacEachen: They did not. Can the hon. member tell me which provincial government has objected to any of these principles and which ones?

Mr. Lambert: Yes. The province of Alberta, for instance.

Mr. MacEachen: Exactly. That is the only one.

Mr. Lambert: And is the province of Alberta less important than the others? Perhaps it is in the eyes of the minister.

Mr. MacEachen: Not at all.

[Mr. Lambert.]

An hon. Member: They do not have any Grits there.

Mr. Lambert: That province and other provinces having the appropriate jurisdiction will also object to the compulsory features. They will also object to some of the other features of the plan. Instead of negotiating acceptable agreements with the provinces beforehand, this government tries to ram this plan down their throats. We know the type of legislation this government is capable of putting on record. We know that the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act was supposed to have been, shall we say, the star in the crown of the Liberal administration of 1957.

An hon. Member: It was.

Mr. Lambert: Not one provincial government was prepared to enter into an agreement. It was a sterile bill because there was a provision therein that none of the provinces found acceptable. But the Conservative government was willing to enter freely into agreements with those provinces which, on mutually acceptable terms, were prepared to enter into agreements with respect to the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act.

This is what should have been done with regard to this bill. Some mutually acceptable base should have been negotiated. Also, if the government means what it says it should provide an opting-out provision. That should be done if the government is to be consistent. In saying that I am not arguing the pros and cons of opting out, but to be consistent the government must provide for the right of opting out.

The province of Alberta is opposed to this plan, but this government hopes to blackjack the administration and the people of Alberta into taking this plan in the same way, I venture to say, that it will be done with the province of Quebec. I say that because the government of that province has rightly said that this is a matter within its jurisdiction. It has a right to examine the whole question. They have a right to determine what kind of plan they want and when they will institute it on the basis of their medical and financial resources. But does this bill say that? No. We still have the financial blackjack inherent in this bill. I find that unacceptable in so far as this bill is concerned.