

Adjournment Debate

It is true that Ontario had a good medicare program in place in 1967, but it did not cover everybody and everything, and it was obvious from a national point of view that there could not be a national medicare program, one which would cover other, poorer provinces, unless Ontario was part of it. I think all Canadians are proud of the decision to have a national medicare program which could offer a standard to all Canadians, and I do not think the people of Ontario regret that they are part of it. I also do not think that our program costs more today than it would have if they had continued the program they had, which even the hon. member has admitted did not provide the coverage the national program does.

We began in 1967 with an open ended program. We were ready to write cheques for half the liability incurred by provinces in establishing their systems. It did not have the kind of guidelines or ceilings on it which the hon. member, with a hindsight argument, says it ought to have had, but let us look at it as it was then. We wanted the program to grow rapidly. We wanted to bring in the many thousands of Canadians who were not getting adequate medical attention. We wanted hospitals to be built all over the country in places where there never had been hospitals. We wanted a new quality of medical service for our people, and we got it.

A point came—and perhaps it came over the past few years when the hospital side of that program was mature—when there were more or less an adequate number of hospital beds provided across this country, with some regional misallocation, I grant. The problem then was to control the rate of growth, and the federal government turned its attention to that, not just this year and not just with the announcement in the recent budget that there would be new hospital shared cost arrangements after 1980.

This was not just begun by the federal government recently. It was begun several years ago in negotiations and efforts to try to make the provinces realize that the rate of growth was excessive, and was not something which could be sustained by this country.

We had a partnership in the building of these hospitals. The partnership was that the provinces would decide where the hospitals would go, how big they would be and how much they would cost, and the federal government would write the cheques for half. Now the provinces are finding that they have to close hospitals. I insist that they are not closing hospitals because of the federal program. That program continues until 1980, and if Ontario, for example, wanted to double its hospital budget until 1980, the federal government would pay exactly half the cost, as it has done in the past.

The point is that the provinces have realized on their own that the rate of growth is unacceptable and that we have to turn to low cost alternatives. Ottawa has offered to support a range of low cost alternatives which the provinces could begin today if they wanted to. They have not yet done so. They have until October 1, but as far as the federal government is concerned we wish they had come in on them long ago.

Mr. Rynard: You guaranteed the quality of medicare.

• (2210)

POST OFFICE—LETTER URGING PITNEY BOWES CUSTOMERS
TO BUY OLYMPIC METER DIES—REASON MINISTER SENT
LETTER

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, my topic tonight arises from a question I put to the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) on April 13 when I asked what portion of the \$150 selling price of postage meter dies was to be retained by the seller, Pitney Bowes of Canada, and also why the taxpayer of Canada was asked to pay for the minister's solicitation on behalf of this company. As usual the minister did not answer the question, which was fairly straightforward. Instead he said:

Mr. Speaker, Pitney Bowes has a vested interest in selling meter dies, which is their business. We have a vested interest in ensuring that meter dies contain the Olympic symbol in order that people who use meter dies rather than stamps will avail themselves of the opportunity of offering financial assistance to the Olympics. Of course, this is a co-operative venture of the Post Office, Pitney Bowes and the Olympics in general.

From that it is clear that neither the question about the portion of the purchase price, nor the reason for the taxpayer being called upon to bear this expense, was answered.

This is a very serious matter and it is not the first time it has been raised with this minister or by me in the House. The first time I can think of was in March when the question referred to a press release issued by the minister on February 25 about a \$12 million issue of Olympic commemorative stamps. I believe that release contained misleading statements as well. In it the minister stated:

We need to show our young Canadian athletes that we care about them—that we are aware of the tremendous effort and the sacrifice they are making for Canada. One way you can give your support is by buying this commemorative stamp issue for your collection at philatelic outlets.

When the question was raised in the House on March 26 the minister explained that the net proceeds after the cost of production are turned over to COJO and COJO is expected to pass on 3 per cent of whatever it receives to the Canadian Olympic Association. That, of course, would go to assist the athletes.

It is obvious from the remarks that it is not 3 per cent of the \$12 million, but 3 per cent of a smaller amount which the minister was unable to pin down, and indicates less support than would be implied by the minister's press release.

In the Pitney Bowes case a letter from the minister addressed to Pitney Bowes customers on March 17 states several times that the program of selling postage meter dies will help the athletes. In the second paragraph it states "to provide aid to Canadian amateur sport"; in the third paragraph it refers to "support for the games and for amateur sport" and in the last paragraph it states "your organization can show its support for the 1976 summer Olympic games and for our young athletes."

The letter states that the die is available for \$150. There is no information on what portion of the \$150 will go to the athletes and what portion would be retained by Pitney Bowes.