

*Medicare*

amendment before us, that I can hardly resist such an attractive proposition.

Naturally, the member for Lapointe already knows how I am going to vote. But nevertheless, I feel bound to give him my reasons, and because he inferred that most government members from Quebec had not read or understood the bill before us—the previous speaker also implied the same thing—I may say that perhaps they have not read it entirely themselves.

The amendment actually deals with fiscal compensation, and the member for Lapointe himself gave as an example the province of Quebec. In particular, he mentioned hospital insurance, suggesting that the province had withdrawn from that scheme, which is a joint program at present.

Now, the member for Lapointe slightly altered the facts because, if I am not mistaken, the province of Quebec will withdraw in 1970 from the hospital insurance plan. Therefore—

**Mr. Grégoire:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I think the minister is honest in those intentions he is ascribing to me, but if he reads my speech tomorrow, he will find that I have not said that Quebec has opted out at this time, but rather that Quebec has a right to opt out of that plan and that it can get fiscal compensation if it wants. I have not stated that it has already opted out of that plan.

**Mr. Cadieux (Terrebonne):** That is precisely the trend of my argument, Mr. Speaker. If, as far as hospital insurance is concerned, Quebec can experiment for a few years and then opt out with a fiscal compensation, if such a formula is agreeable to the hon. member for Lapointe, then I say to him: Read the bill and you will find that it proposes the same formula. The federal government seeks to set up a medicare plan and within that scheme, there has to be principles and standards as well as a basis for fiscal compensation. That is why we say that such a plan must be given a try for a few years. In this bill, which has not yet been amended, March 31, 1972, is mentioned as the date on which, on the basis of the experience of the years gone by, a fiscal compensation will be paid to any province which wants to opt out; actually, not "which wants" but "which will have" to opt out anyway.

And clause 8 provides that:

At least six months before the 31st day of March, 1972, the government of Canada shall review—

Not "may", but "shall", review.

—the provisions of this act respecting the amount and manner of payment of the contributions payable by Canada pursuant to section 3 with a view to formulating proposals for any changes therein that appear then to be necessary or desirable with respect to the amount and manner of payment, whether by the transfer or allocation of specified tax revenues by Canada and the making of equalization payments and other fiscal adjustments by Canada in lieu of the contributions that would otherwise be payable pursuant to section 3.

And I do not see, Mr. Speaker, how the members from the province of Quebec can wonder about such a clear, fair and reasonable proposition, one which allows the federal government to establish a program to act as co-ordinator in all the provinces of Canada, to offer to each a plan based on principles of absolute equality, and then to offer them fiscal compensation based on the experience of the last few years, which will allow them to exercise their full responsibility, as is the hope of the member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire), as well as the Liberal members on this side of the house, myself, and the member who has just spoken.

I think this bill reflects the spirit of the constitution and I do not see in what way anyone would find it embarrassing to reject this proposal which I actually find premature with regard to the demand for immediate fiscal compensation for the provinces.

I say it is premature because there is no basis for comparison at the present time and, therefore, we would not know to what fiscal compensation a province would be entitled. I think the proposition of the federal government to the provinces to go it together is just and in the interest of the whole population, and that there is no call in a case such as this to harp on the same old nationalist themes from Quebec which try to show the government as always attempting to infringe upon the rights of the province of Quebec.

That is not at all the point here. The question is to establish, according to the constitution and the rights and prerogatives of the federal government, a universal medicare program which would make all Canadians equal with regard to their needs in the case of unexpected illness, and which in addition provides after three, four or perhaps five years of experience, an adequate, fair and reasonable fiscal compensation plan for everyone.