

*Medicare*

legislation, and I suggest, Mr. Speaker, it is time we got back to principles. This brings me back to co-operative federalism, which is a fine sounding principle and the Prime Minister supports it.

• (8:50 p.m.)

Precedents have been set when the majority of the provinces have agreed with the policies of the federal government regarding areas under their jurisdiction. Yet this time, when we are concerned with a field that cuts right into provincial jurisdiction, the 50 members from the province of Quebec, even in the light of the precedent on education, have hardly uttered a murmur. I have great respect for la belle province, since I worked there for three summers,—although my language would not seem to justify it. I find myself amazed at the compliance, the acquiescence, the lack of intestinal fortitude, of these members from Quebec to stand up on a basic jurisdictional question.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) has now to take these plans back and have a conference with Mr. Johnson. This has not happened. I have some good friends over there, and I hope I will have even after tonight. However, I believe the people of Quebec can quite rightly condemn the members of that province for their failure to take a stand on this issue. The people of Quebec have quite rightly urged the people in the other nine provinces to have regard for the constitution. I do not go along with this myth that the B.N.A. Act cannot be changed. I am all for change. There could be a constitutional conference.

I am not saying this B.N.A. Act is a hallowed instrument. It has given certain basic rights, and it has provided the basic seed for change in Quebec. You can call it a quiet revolution or a loud revolution, but it is a revolution that is going to be good for Canada. Unfortunately, there are too many members from Quebec on that side of the house. I believe that Canada would be a better place if many uncommitted young people from Quebec would come on this side. There would be a better dialogue, a better discussion. In this case, we have a vacuum,—we have a vacuum in many areas. But this is a fundamental area, because a precedent will be set for any government to say to the ten provinces, "We have a certain pot for educational purposes; if you subscribe to certain rules you can have some of it, but if you do not, you do not get it".

[Mr. Nowlan.]

The political power flowing from this position is fantastic because, while so many of the provinces in Canada today agree with the principle of medicare, they do not have the fiscal ability to implement it. Well, the carrot is held out by the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The Trojan horse has been wheeled up beside the wall, but it is not going to seduce the people behind the wall. They are going to have to do something about that horse. Any provincial premier in any of the provinces of Canada has to react to that horse that has been placed there. I say that it is a gilded horse; I say it is a tainted horse. This horse has no more substance than the wooden horse of Troy—and I am not talking about the ends of the horse. As I say, this horse is made of wood and I think the intentions of the Minister of National Health and Welfare to implement a basic service in Canada are built of the same wood because we are not going to have the service. We cannot have the service. We are going to have our bills paid, and I am all for that. I want my bills paid, too. Most of us in this house are the fathers of children and we have some bills to pay. I am happy about the principle of the payment of bills.

I come back to this vacuum in the dialogue between members. I am not going to single out any member. I may have embarrassed one member by singling him out. I can see a member sitting in the backbenches who was very vocal in the press and on the radio and was a member of the thinkers conference. Since he is a new member, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we are in the same class. I feel he and I are colleagues at the bar, so to speak. I read his columns with interest. However, as I say, there is a passive acquiescence in connection with this fundamental problem. The hon. member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. McCutcheon) spoke to me once privately, and I echo what he said at that time. I do not know whether or not he has made a speech, but he said that those at the grass roots quite often are not concerned about fundamental, constitutional problems. This is understandable. They want their bills paid, and this is understandable, too.

I spoke at a meeting in Digby last night, and I know that area is quite concerned about an announcement that the base at Cornwallis is going to be closed. I believe this question may come to the floor of the house. I drove by the base at two o'clock this morning. It is understandable that such people are not too concerned with anything connected with constitutional problems. They want their