

*Medicare*

There are almost 1,500 optometrists in Canada and only around 300 certified ophthalmologists. The need for both practitioners seems obvious.

We recommend that the restrictive and discriminatory elements of the bill be removed and that the definition of "medical practitioner," for the purposes of the bill, be changed to include optometrists.

I am sure the house will agree with me that the recommendations and request I have read are reasonable. Then according to clause 2, paragraph (f) of the bill, eye examinations cannot be conducted except by a medical eye practitioner or ophthalmologist. Such person is not the only person licensed to provide professional services to the general public, because the optometrists are licensed and do provide most of these services in most communities. By this bill optometrists are excluded and discriminated against.

Yes, the house can see that this is a financial bill. I remind the minister that this is public money he is spending and that the 1,500 optometrists of Canada are also taxpayers of considerable stature. They are being taxed by this bill as it now stands to help to pay for services to the general public, which services, they are precluded from providing.

Optometrists provide and perform services for the following departments and government bodies. I shall name some of them: the Department of Indian Affairs, the Department of Veterans Affairs; the Workmen's Compensation Board headquarters in Toronto; the boards of education across our country and county health units. But the optometrists are not recognized in this bill. They are provincially and federally licensed.

• (8:00 p.m.)

I submit that this bill outlaws itself when it discriminates against any professional persons who are licensed to practice their professions and who are professionally and academically qualified to minister to the physical needs of our people. The same principle applies to the government's discriminatory attitude toward the chiropractors of Canada; they, too, should be included within the provisions made by this bill. There are many people in Canada who suffer from disabilities—spinal ailments, for example—which require the attention of chiropractors. Medical practitioners appear to be of little use to patients suffering from this kind of affliction.

In connection with medical care and the concern shown by this government for the health of some of the people of this country, I

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]

should like to draw attention to some additional fields in which the government could be rendering valuable assistance to respected bodies who work unstintingly and voluntarily in the interests of the health of the Canadian public.

First, there is the Victorian Order of Nurses, an order well known and highly respected across our land. They need assistance and the government could do nothing better than to make grants of a size which would help this altruistic and charitable organization. Then there is the Canadian Cancer Society whose campaigns I have assisted in our county. This organization is in the forefront of the fight against cancer in Canada, and the government might well manifest a greater interest in its work and support the society extensively.

I have here a clipping from the Toronto *Star* of Monday, October 17 under the heading: "New cancer case every 56 seconds U.S. society's prediction for 1967". This information comes from a convention held in New York city at which an increase in the incidence of cancer was predicted. As I say, the government might well participate to a greater extent in the work of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Another organization which I wish to commend is Alcoholics Anonymous for its great work in rehabilitating the wrecks of men and women—wrecks created by the government sale of alcoholic beverages. All governments across our country will soon have to face the fact that we derive millions of dollars in revenues from the alcoholic beverage trade, while doing little or nothing to assist helpless victims of alcoholism. I say to the minister and to the government: You are trying in a very ineffective way to manifest your concern for the health of the Canadian people. I have outlined a few fields where we should be at work. Do not let your acute concern for this bill restrain you from wrestling with the problems I have just outlined.

I wish, now, to congratulate the government of the province of Ontario on the medicare measures now in effect in that province through OMSIP. I am sure all the provinces will put their own versions of medical programs and medical care into effect in accordance with local needs and conditions. I wish at this point to express my admiration for the Hall report, the work of a commission which was set up before I was elected to this chamber.