

[Translation]

Mr. Caouette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I respectfully submit that we had the opportunity to ask only one question today. The member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Simard) has been springing up, so to speak, for the past half-hour. He has not had a chance to voice his question. I would like to ask you to be a little more lenient and allow the member for Lac-Saint-Jean to put his question, and that will make two for today.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: That is not within my power because the question period has expired. However, if there is agreement I will recognize the hon. member.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Translation]

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

NAUD, P.Q.—CLOSING OF POST OFFICE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Alcide Simard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Postmaster General. In view of the fact that the Naud ward post office at Alma has been closed since last Monday, has the minister taken the necessary steps so that this population of 7,000 people may be adequately served?

Mr. Speaker: Since the question has been permitted, I suppose the minister may be allowed to answer.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I have already received representations from the member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) in this regard and the officials of my department are looking into the matter.

[English]

HEALTH AND WELFARE

MEDICARE—AUTHORIZATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD COST OF INSURED MEDICAL CARE

The house resumed, from Tuesday, November 29, consideration in committee of Bill No. C-227, to authorize the payment of contributions by Canada toward the cost of insured medical care services incurred by provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans—Mr. MacEachen—Mr. Batten in the chair.

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Medicare

On subclause (d)—“insured services”.

The Chairman: When the committee rose last evening it was considering subclause (d) of clause 2 of the bill.

Mr. Brand: Mr. Chairman, when the house rose last evening I was having a discussion with the minister regarding the type of amendment which would be acceptable to him. Perhaps the minister has had an opportunity to read *Hansard* and now knows what I proposed at that time.

Earlier yesterday I had referred to two points in respect of clause 2 (d). The first was whether doctors could practise outside the plan, and the second was whether patients who attended such doctors could be reimbursed for the cost of their services from the plan, wherever it was in effect, providing they were insured residents. It took some time to get an answer, but the minister in reply presumably assured me that doctors could practise outside the plan. I found the rest of his answer completely and totally incomprehensible and I should like to read it to him with the hope that he will clarify it. At page 10536 of *Hansard* for yesterday the minister is reported as having said:

What has been requested by the Canadian medical association is that no provision of this bill prohibit the possibility of provincial arrangements which would permit a physician to elect to practise outside any plan, and that there be nothing in this bill to prohibit, for example, an insurable resident of any province from paying a physician directly or having the services rendered by a physician payable to the patient or the insurable resident.

That is the phrase I do not understand. How does one pay the services rendered by a physician to a patient.

Perhaps the meaning is that the payment for such services will be payable from the plan to the insured patient. Will the minister agree with me when I suggest that he has said doctors will be able to practise outside this plan if they desire, and that patients may be reimbursed the cost of such insured services from the plan, wherever it may be in effect?

The amendment I proposed to the minister appears at page 10543 of *Hansard*. I gathered from the reply he gave that he could not support an amendment of this nature because we would be telling the provinces what they should do. I submit we would merely be spelling out to the provinces what they could do and that they would have complete freedom to do so if they desired. That is a different thing, because we are not telling them what to