

*Medicare*

a.m., on October 18, 1966, the position I took in the house last Thursday night and Friday. In his remarks, the minister assured the whole French speaking audience of that network throughout Canada that the federal legislation on medicare respects provincial autonomy and that the purpose of the four conditions inserted in the federal act was to ensure equal treatment between the provinces.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to refute once again those false statements which deceive the Canadian people, and are mere window-dressing, to make them believe that provincial autonomy is respected even though provincial rights are thoroughly violated. The autonomy of the provinces exists not only in the rights granted to the provinces but also in the financial means they need to exercise them. By laying down four conditions, Ottawa is interfering with the freedom of choice of the provinces; by refusing to hand back enough taxation fields to the provinces, Ottawa weakens and reduces financially the exercise of provincial rights.

Therefore, that federal medicare legislation does not respect at all the autonomy of the provinces as far as their rights and their financial means to exercise them are concerned. To maintain that this federal legislation respects provincial autonomy is to deceive the Canadian public on the meaning of autonomy of the governments in a federative system, to oppose flatly the Quebec point of view and to show the most centralizing attitude.

To say that the four federal conditions are designed to strike a balance between the provinces is to want Ottawa to act as a substitute at all times for the initiative and intelligence of the provinces. The provinces hold annual interprovincial meetings and they are able to agree and work out their legislation. They do not need a systematic and omnipotent intruder.

If some provinces are too poor, the others can set up between themselves an assistance fund. To use constantly that balance as a argument is to perpetuate the best reason for federal interference and encroachment. That systematic presence of Ottawa is creating such imbalance, tension and discontent. That presence of the central government in provincial fields of jurisdiction goes against the existence of a truly federal union and is proof of the legislative union towards which Ottawa is rapidly moving.

What is most unfair in the federal medicare legislation is its immediate refusal to grant the tax adjustment to the provinces which will decide to opt out.

The practical result of that refusal will be an annual loss of millions of dollars for a non-participating province and, in addition to supporting a provincial medicare scheme, the citizens of that province will have to pay to Ottawa taxes which will be spent in the other provinces.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Manpower and Immigration made such a choice and should now praise centralization. By so doing, he completely disowns the aspirations of the province he comes from. Moreover, in so far as Quebec is concerned, he becomes a stranger, an opponent.

Through his attitude toward the bill on medicare, the hon. Minister of Manpower and Immigration finally reveals what he thinks about federal-provincial relations. He proves to be, just like his other colleagues in the cabinet and other Liberal members from Quebec, a true centralizer. Before being elected to parliament, he claimed he was going to Ottawa to save confederation. How can he try to save the confederation when he agrees, here in the house—and when he has definite responsibilities—to all kinds of infringements of the constitution and encroachments on provincial rights? I find instead that like his other colleagues—and I am speaking in this house as a free man—he is only trying to save his own skin and preserve his eventual leadership for the federal Liberal party.

I want to express today my deep disappointment, as well as that of thousands of people in Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, in order to redress the injustice of the federal medicare legislation which does not provide for a fiscal compensation, I move, seconded by the member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire), that all the words after "that" be deleted and that the following be substituted therefor:

This house, while of the opinion that the necessary steps should be taken to ensure that appropriate medical services are made available to all Canadians, nevertheless believes that no legislation providing for insured medical services in Canada would be adequate unless it provides for a system of fiscal compensation for any province desiring to set up its own autonomous medical insurance plan.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret):** Order. I shall read to the house the amendment moved by the member for Sherbrooke and