

### *Drug Costs to Welfare Recipients*

immediately consider taking action with respect to providing drugs free of charge to those in receipt of social assistance, is entirely justifiable.

Indeed, this is the type of "pharmaceutical" assistance in a general sense which, as I have already mentioned, is made available under the provinces' social assistance plans to whoever receives other forms of assistance. However, the provinces do not avail themselves fully of the opportunity which is theirs under the Canada Assistance Plan, to provide assistance to the less needy which are not eligible to the full assistance allowances and who may need just a little help, as well as to those individuals who generally are self-sufficient but unable to afford significant purchases of drugs.

This is the responsibility that the government was to discharge and has discharged, specifically as regards the motion put forward by the hon. member. There is no doubt that, with respect to the second part of the motion, namely the increase in welfare recipients benefits and payment terms for those covered by Medicare and with limited earnings, we should enact a legislation respecting the establishment of a plan we might call "Pharmacare". In this area, the provinces are on the ball and should pass legislation shortly so that there may be better medical care since, as I said a few moments ago, taking care of patients is fine indeed but without drugs, little can be achieved.

It is regrettable that a modern doctor cannot provide his patients with drugs so that their health is not affected.

The hon. member for Simcoe North mentioned the fact that this injustice gives rise to quite a number of problems and I am sure that the provinces will eventually wake up and assist those people who, even though they are not in need, can be considered as "marginal". They have been of service to their country but in the twilight of their life they do not enjoy adequate means of subsistence.

These people must be able to see a doctor, to afford health care and drugs. As pointed out by the hon. member for Simcoe North, senior citizens deserve much because they have been paying taxes and serving our people all their lives long. Some of them have been on the battlegrounds to help preserve our freedom. Indeed, all governments have endeavoured to maintain in this world the freedom we all expect.

We may have, in the long run, to adjust our policies so that, as far as health is concerned, elder people who cannot afford the cost of health care and drugs do not have to suffer from their situation.

We have partially corrected this situation with regard to Medicare and I hope that in the course of future federal-provincial conferences, provincial governments will come up with something constructive with regard to the Pharmacare plan so that every Canadian will be able to enjoy a better way of life and that those persons who have fought for their country will be able to spend the rest of their lives serenely in Canada.

I witnessed too much suffering, I saw too many people at the mercy of money and who could not get the medi-

[Mr. Isabelle.]

cine necessary to their survival. Some people died not because of lack of care, but maybe because of the lack of medicine they should have had at the start of their illness.

I am not in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. member for Simcoe North, for the simple reason, as I have said before, that part of the act would be entirely different, as we cannot, according to the Medical Care Act, change anything without consulting the provinces, after which it might be advisable to think about an agency named Pharmacare. As to the first part of the motion, the hon. member knows very well, with his great heart, that he should have stated it before the provincial representatives, who are a little remote from the whole thing at the moment.

[English]

**Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway):** Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on this motion I wish to say how much we appreciated the remarks of the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard). His sincerity, common sense and humanity were never more evident than when he spoke of the very great need of providing free drugs for people on social assistance.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mrs. MacInnis:** He spoke of cases of human beings in real need about which he knew. Hon. members know only too well what these days, weeks and months of unemployment, inflation and rising living costs have done to erode the incomes of people on old age security and families faced with unemployment trying to get along for an extended period of time.

● (5:50 p.m.)

The hon. member for Hull (Mr. Isabelle) referred to the federal government as being a co-ordinating government. I do not think he can get out from under as easily as that. True, it is a co-ordinating government, but the federal government is a tax collecting government; it collects the big revenues. The hon. member should not be allowed to forget that the Hall report recommended, after careful study, that there should be a medicare system which included provision of prescription drugs. In addition, the Senate Committee on Aging recommended as follows:

That a nationwide universal health service program be instituted to provide a comprehensive range of services including medical care, dental care, home care, prescription drugs and prosthetic appliances and that if staging is required in the introduction of all or any part of this program, older people be given special consideration.

We are not talking about some mythical time when the provincial governments get together, lay down their arms and say war shall be no more. The need exists now, before these elderly people are taken off this earth by natural events. I do not believe the hon. member who spoke for the government should be complacent about this issue. I wish to quote some figures from my own