

*Medicare*

Welfare pointed out very eloquently that to have a plan in a province with more than one agency would lead to unnecessary duplication and an increase in the administrative cost. That was turned down by the former Liberal government. When the Conservative party took power, under the present Leader of the Official Opposition, it implemented the plan. That government made the plan a living reality by saying to each province, "As soon as you are ready to go ahead with the plan under the legislation as enacted, we will pay the 50 per cent which we are committed to pay". So, within a very short period each province accepted the plan and had its hospitalization costs covered by the public sector of the economy.

Not one single province, including those provinces such as Ontario which are administered by Conservative governments, adopted in respect of hospitalization the proposals which we have heard day after day from the representatives of the official opposition. The provinces, when faced with the realities of administering a hospitalization program, realized this would not work or if it did work would work with a great deal more difficulty and a great deal more expense. There is another objection to what the members of the official opposition are proposing. What they are proposing essentially in their amendment is that we let the provinces decide who shall act as agencies under the plan. What will happen in this case will be that the provinces will say, as the Ontario government said under its OMSIP plan, that the people may be covered under the plans of private insurance companies, or non-profit plans sponsored and to a large extent administered and controlled by the medical profession, as is the case in Manitoba and Ontario. In other words, there will be a variety of agencies.

I am surprised that the hon. member for Simcoe East, who is a doctor, would make the proposal he is making. What has happened in every one of the provinces where this kind of situation exists? I can tell you what has happened in my province of Manitoba. The non-profit private plan was begun at the suggestion of the medical profession of Manitoba. It has been quite substantial and has been one of the best of the voluntary plans in this country. It is, however, in constant difficulty because the private insurance companies are following a deliberate policy, referred to by my colleague the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre a few moments ago, of loss-leaders. They go to the various employers who have

large groups of employees who are relatively young and say, "Do not belong to the Manitoba medical service; we will offer you a better deal by cutting the rates". The private insurance companies are cutting the heart out of the doctor sponsored plans. I am surprised that the hon. member for Simcoe East who is a doctor, would sponsor an amendment which in effect would make a gift to the private insurance companies at the expense, not of the government or the people, but the doctor sponsored non-profit plans. I think, these plans have played an honourable role in this country, for which the doctors of this country deserve a great deal of credit.

This is precisely what the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Simcoe East would do. It would divide the agencies operating in each province so that the administrative costs would be increased. It would be a bonanza for the accountants, because we would need an army of accountants to ensure that the private insurance companies, in fact, run non-profit plans. I am not suggesting that the insurance companies are doing anything which is wrong morally. The insurance companies are not in business for any reason other than that for which any other business establishment in this country is in business. The insurance companies are in business to make money for the companies and their shareholders. Why would any member in this house or in any provincial legislature believe the insurance companies would wish to participate in a medical insurance plan from which they would not make any profit? It is obvious that they would not want to participate and would not participate, unless they could see a way to make a profit either directly or in some indirect manner. I suggest we would need an army of accountants to make sure that the insurance companies, in fact, operate their part of the health insurance plan without profit.

• (3:10 p.m.)

For these reasons I oppose the amendment. I oppose it also because everything that has been said in its support flies in the face of the arguments advanced so well, so clearly and so unequivocally that there is really no answer to them, by the Hall Commission. Before concluding I wish to place on the record a few paragraphs from the official press release of the Royal Commission on Health Services, dated June 19, 1964. I remind the hon. member for Simcoe East, who introduced the amendment, that the Hall Commission was appointed by the former government; that the