

*Canada Health Act*

whole lot of them under the War Measures Act or something like that. This is no way to conduct a federal Government.

My attention was drawn to the fact that there was a change to the purpose of this particular Bill during the discussions in committee. I think it would be worth while to put the two versions on the record—the purpose as originally presented to the House and the purpose as it came out in committee. I have a copy of the original Bill here. I think it is worth reading the purpose in its entirety. Clause 4 of the Bill originally tabled on December 12, 1983—perhaps it is not available to everyone and everyone does not necessarily read it—reads:

The purpose of this Act is to advance the objectives of Canadian health care policy, while recognizing the primary responsibility of the provinces for the provision of health care services, by establishing criteria and conditions that must be met before full payment may be made under the Act of 1977 in respect of insured health services and extended health care services provided under provincial law.

That was the original purpose. Also I notice that the objectives of the policy as provided in Clause 3 are extended in the original version and somewhat reduced in the final version. The purpose which is in the amended version now before us is somewhat shorter and reads:

The purpose of this Act is to establish criteria and conditions that must be met before full payment may be made under the Act of 1977 in respect of insured health services and extended health care services provided under provincial law.

There is quite a distinction, but what I find a little worrisome—and this goes back to my earlier worry—is the use of the word “must”. A number of speakers, including the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East (Mr. Allmand), suggested that Hon. Members of this Party are opposed to medicare. Nothing could be further from the truth. This Party has supported medicare from the beginning. It wants medicare provided within the means of Canadians. It wants the same medicare system provided across the country. It is not opposed to medicare. I regret any Member rising and even by implication suggesting the contrary. But the use of the word “must” in this instance I find a denial of the true meaning of federalism. It is demonstrable that the centralizing propensities of the federal Government have been at the base of many of our problems. This is another example.

Regardless of the provisions of the Constitution, it is almost as though the federal Government is deciding on its own what provincial governments must do in respect to a matter under provincial jurisdiction before there can be any possibility of a cost-sharing formula—“you had better do this or you will get no help from us”. I find this wrong in terms of the federal principle despite the acknowledgement in the preamble that we are dealing with a provincial matter. No one has questioned that. Even the Government has not questioned it, but it has had the effrontery, without consultation and even turning its back on consultation when it is offered, to try to lay down the conditions for the fulfilment of a constitutional responsibility within the provinces.

The propaganda campaign mentioned by earlier speakers was launched even before the Bill was presented to Parliament without consultation with the provinces as a means of creating an issue, not reducing the differences which may exist because

of monetary restraints. I just do not understand why the Government seems so intent on creating federal-provincial confrontation. That has marked its passage from its inception under the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). Perhaps therein lies the problem. Perhaps the Prime Minister feels that he has done his work of instilling confrontation as a means of getting the country into debt and preventing it from working. Perhaps he finds that the future is bleak because of the confrontational tactics and has decided that it is about time to watch the process from afar without assuming any responsibility, I do not really know. However, I deplore the notion that the federal Government should draw up a Bill which will penalize the provinces for not doing what they want to do and what they will do within their fiscal powers or the means they have of producing health services.

Like the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East, I too worry about the provisions of long-term care. It is a growing problem in Canada. The demographics are telling us this. The tax base is going to be lower. Those who pay taxes will be fewer in number. Those who rely on the services which the taxes provide will be more numerous. In 15, 20 or 30 years from now there will be a heavy burden, not just because of the debt that has been created by this Government but because of its promises. The country is being weakened by this confrontational procedure.

● (1240)

The need for chronic care in Canada is mounting, there is no question about that. When one of my predecessor colleagues entered politics in British Columbia, the former leader of the PC Party, Dr. Scott Wallace, his main objective was to get extended care extended. Unfortunately, out of sheer frustration, he felt he could no longer pursue this objective because he seemed to be getting nowhere. At one time I thought it was the local provincial government that was causing the frustration for Doctor Wallace. Having now examined this Bill and the whip hand which the federal Government has over the provincial governments with their narrow tax base, the cause of the frustration of Doctor Scott Wallace is obvious. I now know what caused him to throw up his hands in absolute frustration.

I have just a minute remaining to make a proposal. This Bill acknowledges where the constitutional responsibility lies on this matter, and that is with the provinces. I throw this proposal out; it came to me only a few minutes ago. It has not been discussed with anyone in my Party so I do not throw it out as a Party notion. I bring it forward as one who is concerned about Canada and about health care.

In matters of this sort where there is need for a federal financial input to assist the fulfilment of a provincial responsibility, should there not be some mechanism such as the joint resolution notion which is used in other fields under the Constitution? A Bill or a resolution covering these matters could be produced by the federal Parliament and then ratified by the provincial legislatures. It would show the agreement of the two levels of government in an area where there is not shared responsibility in terms of provision of the service, but a