

Adjournment Debate

respond to the crisis. As, within the existing legislation, it does not have the capacity that it needs in order to respond effectively.

I think the Government should go along with the recommendations of the Special Parliamentary Task Force on Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements that any new funding arrangements—and this is presumably what the Canada Health Act would bring in—would provide the federal Government with the capacity to gradually withhold federal funding from Provinces that were seen to be in violation of the principles of Medicare.

If we had a Canada Health Act which gave the federal Government that kind of flexibility and provided for a gradual withholding of funding, and provided that extra billing and user fees, and profit-oriented hospitals, and various other things that have been on the increase lately which threaten Medicare, were in violation of Medicare, then the Minister of National Health and Welfare would be living up to her responsibilities.

If we do not get an Act in the very near future, I am afraid the Minister will be quite justifiably open to the accusation that she fiddled while Rome burned by doing nothing except talk while Medicare went to pieces before our very eyes.

Mr. Jim Schroder (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Hon. Member for Winnipeg Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie) who

points out very clearly the threat that faces Medicare in Canada. It emphasizes the importance of a careful consideration before the Act is drafted.

As the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) has stated on several occasions, and as recently as yesterday, it can only be restated that work is progressing as quickly as is possible on the new Canada Health Act, and that as soon as it is appropriate she will be meeting with provincial Health Ministers to complete the consultation process before introducing the new Act to Parliament. This is a very important program to Canadians with very large amounts of money involved and it is essential that the time be taken to develop the Act properly.

The Minister has received a great deal of mail in favour of maintaining and improving our universal Medicare system—the best in the world—and in support of her efforts to develop a new Act. She is grateful for this support. It is hoped that all Members of this House would put similar pressure on provincial Governments to likewise support these efforts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adapted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at two o'clock.

At 6.28 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.