

Medicare

I do not intend to deal with this subject very much longer, but I want to point out that the doctors in Canada are now being overworked and have to look after too many patients. I talked with an individual the other day who had waited for four hours before being seen by a doctor. He was then seen for about ten minutes and, as a result, the doctor suggested he needed an operation. He could not have one at that time because no hospital beds were available. That is the desperate situation with which we are faced today.

As a result of this serious situation, one of two things are happening in Canada. Either doctors are increasing their workloads and seeing more patients than they should, this results in a reduction or lessening of the quality of the medical care they are providing. Or doctors are refusing to see any more patients than they can properly handle. The quality of service provided by those doctors remains the same, but what is happening to those people who need care and attention? They cannot see a doctor, so they go to the emergency departments of hospitals. Those emergency departments today are overworked and the people must wait for hours to be seen. I am wondering if some of them are not losing their lives because of this lack of personnel.

Most hospitals in Canada are short of house doctors and interns and some of them are operating without any interns at all. Let us not defraud the people of Canada. We must provide funds and schools in order to increase the number of physicians in this country. How in the world can this government hope to obtain doctors from the United Kingdom under present circumstances and perhaps some Maritime provinces? The Canadian Medical Council is the enabling body so far as doctors are concerned, and if the minister will provide the funds that association will follow the example set by the United States Medical Association and set up a board in London to examine doctors who wish to come to Canada. About two months ago the United States association set up such a board and approximately 600 English doctors took the examination.

Mr. Lewis: May I ask the hon. member a question? Surely, he is mistaken when he says that the Canadian Medical Council is the enabling body. Would it not be more accurate to say that the colleges of physicians and surgeons and similar bodies in each of the provinces are the licensing bodies?

[Mr. Rynard.]

Mr. Rynard: I should like to thank the hon. member for his question. I believe two provinces, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, in competition with the U.S.A. do accept doctors from England and give them licences to practice. What I am suggesting is that a doctor can obtain an enabling certificate to practice in any province providing he pays for the licence.

The United States association set up a board in London so that those doctors who wanted to leave England to come to the United States, and according to my figures there were about 600, could be examined by that board. How do those doctors take our examinations if they wish to come to Canada? They must come to Montreal or Toronto to do so. Surely, this is one area in which funds could be provided to set up a board to examine those doctors we need to look after the people when the medicare plan before us is passed by this house—we hope with some changes.

It is my belief that there have not been sufficient discussions with the provinces regarding this medicare plan. I do not believe this important bill in this field of medicare has been taken seriously enough or discussed in a satisfactory manner. Surely, some agreement could be reached between the provinces and the federal government on a common denominator.

I am not satisfied with the manner suggested for paying for this plan. It has been suggested that the federal government intends to pay \$14 per capita, but percentage-wise that amount has surely gone up. The cost of medical services in Ontario at this time is over \$40 per capita. The fact is that if we pay \$14 per capita in Ontario that will represent about one third of the cost in this province. This government is also not paying its share of the administrative costs. It is not right to suggest that the government will be paying about half of the cost, and no one is more aware of that than the minister.

Let me draw to the attention of this committee the views of the Conservative party, as represented here by Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. It is our belief that any plan for the coverage of medical costs on the basis of a prepaid insurance scheme should not be on a universal and compulsory basis, but should be based on the following principles: Medical services, at an adequate level, should be available to all Canadians on a prepaid basis. This being a field primarily within provincial jurisdiction, the federal government should not seek to superimpose any national, universal or compulsory scheme on the prov-