

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 10, 1966

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Acting Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-254, for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service for the financial year ending the 31st March, 1967.

Bill read first time.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West) moved, with leave, that the bill be placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading at the next sitting.

Motion agreed to.

MEDICAL CARE BILL

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Acting Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-227 to authorize the payment of contributions by Canada towards the cost of insured medical care services incurred by provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans.

Bill read first time.

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?

Hon. Alan Macnaughton moved, with leave, that the bill be read the second time now.

He said: Honourable senators, in making my initial remarks as a newcomer to this chamber, I am well aware of the significance of this occasion for me. So it is with due humility that I rise this evening to introduce a bill of very considerable significance to our people and to the welfare of everyone residing within the borders of our land. This bill adds one more step in the forward march to a program of health and welfare benefits which, it is our dream, will, in the not too distant future, see Canadians free of want and of ill health, and leading other countries along the road of good living for all.

Less than a decade ago, this Senate passed a measure not unrelated to the one with which we will be dealing this evening. I would remind honourable senators of the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act which has been enabling the residents of all prov-

inces and jurisdictions to have readily available without financial obstacles the benefits of hospital and diagnostic services. When this act came into operation there were those who raised some doubts and who expressed some fears about the effects of certain features of the law which, on looking back, we now know were groundless. In fact, there is no voice in the whole of this vast country which would be raised today in opposition to the legislation passed at that time in connection with hospital insurance and diagnostic services.

Tonight I am proud to introduce a bill entitled the Medical Care Act which, in effect, complements the benefits already made available through the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Program. The present bill, in effect, fills in the gaps previously left, in that provision is now being made to ensure to our people the services of physicians, both medical practitioners and specialists, without financial obstacle.

When this program comes into complete fruition, our people will have obtained not all of the health services we hope some day to be able to make available to them, but at least those required most frequently by the largest number of citizens. The Government has made abundantly clear that they do not consider this bill to represent the end of the road, but rather an important milestone along the way. I am sure we are all anxious to hasten towards the health goal upon which we have set our sights, but in doing so we must have regard to the total needs of our people, including essential needs beyond the health field. It is for this reason that we must pace our health program. At the same time we must constantly move forward, as we have been moving these last twenty years. It was precisely at that time we were designing our National Health Grants Program which it was envisaged would set the stage for health insurance. Then, just one decade later, we designed our Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Program which was, in effect, the first major step in our comprehensive health insurance plan towards which we are striving today. We now have before us a bill called the Medical Care Act, the second major step towards our goal.

When the Medical Care bill was first presented for the consideration of the legislators, it was designed precisely in accordance with four basic principles which were placed before the provincial governments by the Prime Minister of this country in July 1965. One of these principles related to the scope of the benefits which provincial governments