

ously increased services will cost more. Obviously the per capita cost of large hospitals will be greater than that of small localized hospitals which provide a good and efficient service but a limited one to the people. The provinces went along with the block funding on the understanding that there would not be any reduction in the total amount.

Then we come to the next stage where we have Bill C-12. It goes a step further—the funding will be unilaterally decided by the federal Government.

Let us look at the progression. First there was an agreement. After all, hospitals and medicare are provincial responsibilities under the BNA Act. The federal Government went to the provinces and obtained an agreement so that it could properly get into the field, and there was nothing wrong with that. When that was going well, the Government introduced block funding in which it gradually reduced the amount of money which the provinces were receiving under the individual items. That became a rather vexatious matter for many provinces, perhaps all of them. Then we come to the next step where the federal Government takes over and unilaterally decides how much money would go to the medicare system.

I am not a lawyer, but it seems to me that this is a case where the federal Government is using legislation to initiate a program in which it really has no authority. Surely the agreement prior to 1977 did not give universal, all-time agreement for the federal Government to be in health care. The agreement was changed. It moved from that to block funding where it made some reductions. Perhaps they were palatable but they were reductions. Now, seven years later, we get a Bill under which the federal Government actually takes over the system.

Does the Government have the legal right to do this? I would like to hear a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada with regard to that. I do not think it has the legal right to do what is in the Bill. If it decides on a moral basis that it wants to make so much of a contribution, there is nothing wrong with that, but this is taking over the responsibility. Either the provinces accept it and like it, or they take it and not like it. But they have to follow it or be penalized. Consequently the provinces become responsible to the federal Government, not to the people who elected them. This is democratically wrong.

When Canada was formed the federal Government was a creation of the provinces. It should be responsible to the provinces. Now the case is that the provinces have become responsible to the federal Government when they should be responsible to the people who elected them, which is democracy.

I have a vague recollection of a story I read as a youngster in school about an Arab and a camel. I think it is applicable in this particular case. The Arab was in his tent and a severe cold spell or storm came up. He was in his nice, warm tent, and the camel came along and said: "It is cold out here, it is windy out here. Would you let me put my head in your tent?" The Arab said: "Okay, there is room for your head". A few minutes later the camel said: "Boss, my shoulders are becoming very cold, the wind is bothering them. Do you mind if I put my shoulders in your tent?" The Arab answered: "There is nothing wrong

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with that; bring in your shoulders". Then the rear part of the camel's anatomy was getting cold. He said: "Do you mind, Mr. Boss, if I bring in my back legs?" He thought for a moment and then said: "Well, I guess it would be okay". A few minutes later he said: "Well, I have everything in except my tail, I may as well bring the rest of my body into the tent". He brought his whole body into the tent and pushed out the Arab. There was not room for both.

● (1640)

That is similar to what is happening in this instance. First the federal Government put in its head, then its shoulders, then the rear end and now it is the whole thing. The provinces will either be kicked out or penalized.

I do not like extra billing. I wish it was not required. If the federal Government still paid 50 per cent of the health costs, as it agreed to at the beginning of medicare, there would be no need for extra billing. Doctors could be paid a proper fee.

I do not like the idea of some of our specialists leaving this country. It will hurt all of Canada. We need the best physicians, surgeons and psychologists. We can keep them by providing an incentive for them to have a good standard of living. If we drive them away we all suffer. We need the top practitioners and surgeons all the way down the line. We want them to be happy.

I would like to ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) why the federal Government is now double-billing the people of Alberta. The Minister has publicly stated that the provinces must follow the rules set out by the federal Government. In spite of the BNA Act, if the provinces do not follow the rules they will be penalized. The federal Government will keep the money the people of Alberta pay. That is where the federal Government got the money; it came from Alberta. The federal Government says it will keep that money and the Alberta Government will have to double-bill for the difference. That is just as bad as, if not worse than, a doctor double billing. I do not like double billing in that case either, but that is what the federal Government is doing to the people of Alberta and those in other provinces where there is difficulty meeting health costs. The provinces are being helped by doctors billing the rich, those who can pay. Whether this is done by double billing, taxes or insurance, those who have the money will be the ones who pay.

Using Alberta as an example, those on welfare do not pay. The doctors do not double-bill them. Those with an income below a certain amount are not double-billed by the doctors. Pensioners are not double-billed. That is one advantage of an insurance scheme. With taxation, everyone who is eligible would have to pay the taxes. Those on lower income probably would not pay. That is only proper.

What irks me is that under this Bill the federal Government is unilaterally taking over health care in this country. It is driving the provinces out. It may well drive out the best physicians and surgeons or make them so unhappy that they will not do their best work.