

Health Insurance

that time, certain proposals were made. I mention this matter because a statement was made by the minister at an earlier stage in this debate in which he made some reference to the fact that this legislation was far more generous than were the provisions made at that time.

Mr. Martin: About five and a half times.

Mr. Ellis: I find it extremely difficult to understand the reasoning behind that particular statement. I have in my hand here the proposals of the government of Canada to the dominion-provincial conference on reconstruction, August, 1945. At page 31 we find what the federal government proposed to the provinces at that time. Actually there were four proposals. I am going to read proposal (b) on health insurance which is as follows:

The federal government's health insurance proposal is designed to put provincial governments in a financial position to develop and administer a comprehensive health insurance program worked out by progressive stages on an agreed basis. To this end the various health benefits which the federal government would be prepared to assist in providing have been classified (see table below) and a procedure suggested for a wide degree of flexibility in each province in introducing them.

The proposed federal government's contributions to the cost of each benefit under the health insurance plan as it is brought into effect in each province or in any area within a province is

(i) a basic grant of one-fifth of the estimated cost of each service as shown on the table which follows (as from time to time revised by agreement), and

(ii) one-half the additional actual cost incurred by each provincial government of providing each benefit, provided that the total federal contribution does not exceed the amount stated in the table for each service, or a maximum of \$12.96 per person, when the complete program is in operation.

When that reference is made to \$12.96, I assume that that figure set in 1945 was certainly not intended to remain at that fixed rate over the years, for account would have to be taken of increased costs of administering the services; and certainly this figure would have to be revised in terms of the purchasing power of the dollar at the present time. I therefore do not feel that any argument can be founded on the figure fixed on the basis of the purchasing value of the dollar in 1945. Hence we can see that under the proposals to the provinces in 1945, the federal government was offering to pay what amounts to about 60 per cent of the cost—one-fifth or 20 per cent of the initial estimated cost plus one-half of the additional actual cost—which would bring the federal contribution in line with the percentages suggested by the advisory committee in their report in 1943. But in any event I would draw that matter to the attention of the house because of the statements made by

the minister—and I am sure they are statements which will be repeated by his colleagues—that the present proposals are more generous than the original proposals made by the government in 1945.

Mr. Martin: That is right.

Mr. Ellis: I would also draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the fact that in 1945 the proposals were based on an over-all health insurance scheme. It was not restricted to mere hospital care. I think we must bear in mind the fact that the average Canadian family spends on doctor bills and medical bills over twice as much as they spend on hospital bills.

Mr. Martin: No; just the opposite.

Mr. Ellis: Oh, no. I will check that figure, but from reading the Canadian sickness survey that is my understanding. I have not the copy on my desk at the moment but I will check it afterwards. According to the Canadian sickness survey the amounts spent on medical care were roughly twice as great as the amounts spent by the average Canadian family on hospitalization.

What this scheme actually involves is a very limited contribution to the health and welfare of the Canadian people. I repeat that in so far as it gives a part of a loaf, naturally we are prepared to go along with it. But I would hesitate to have anyone believe that because there is unanimity on this particular piece of legislation we in this group are satisfied that the government has fulfilled its pledges or lived up to the commitments it has made to the Canadian people over the years. It is a far cry from the original proposals made by the government.

In dealing with the extent of the federal contribution I think reference has already been made to the fact that two extremely important items in hospital care have been left out, namely provision for those in hospitals for the mentally ill and those in our tuberculosis sanatoria. The fact that the government has seen fit to give no such assistance whatsoever to the provinces indicates that the percentage figure which they assume to be their share for hospital care is lower than the figure which they give. It seems to me that the Canadian people must keep this health insurance question in proper perspective. What we must recognize full well is that the government has only partially met the commitments made to the provinces and given over the years right since 1919.

It seems to me that those who are anxious to see this legislation put into effect should certainly give this amendment their wholehearted support. Reference has been made