

Medicare

like all other Canadian citizens, paid taxes which were collected by the federal government for distribution in nine provinces under the hospital insurance scheme. The province of Quebec did not receive anything, but kept on paying. Exactly the same thing is happening today with regard to medicare.

If Quebec decides to set up its own medicare plan, it will pay taxes to Ottawa which will be distributed in the nine other provinces to help them establish a medicare plan, and if Quebec wants to set up its own plan, it will have to subject its citizens to double taxation.

• (7:30 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, this is illogical and unfair toward the Quebec people.

As I was saying earlier, I am not against the nine other provinces setting up their own centralized medicare plan, but I object to the province of Quebec being taxed in order to provide the other provinces with medicare. If the other provinces want such an insurance plan, let them stop taking money away from Quebec and let them seek within their own boundaries the necessary funds to finance their own medicare plan.

Such joint plans have been set up on several occasions: the technical training and trade schools assistance plan, the hospital insurance plan, the trans-Canada highway building project. The province of Quebec paid its tax share, but obtained nothing in return, because it wanted to adhere to the Canadian constitution which provided that the Quebec government and not the federal government is responsible for education, health and roads.

Mr. Speaker, if I object to that bill, it is not because I want to deprive the nine other provinces of what they are seeking. Not at all. If I object thereto it is because the legislation does not provide and the minister cannot provide for the provinces which do not wish to take part in a federal medical scheme and would rather set up their own.

There are in the house some Quebec members. They know quite well that if the province of Quebec does not take part in this scheme, it will pay taxes from which it will derive no benefit, but which will be allotted to other provinces.

Mr. Auguste Choquette (Lotbinière): And what about fiscal compensations?

Mr. Grégoire: Well, the fiscal compensation, under clause 8 of Bill No. C-227, cannot come [Mr. Grégoire.]

into force before March 31, 1972, as seen on page 8 of the bill.

I have just read it, I read this clause in full a while ago, and no fiscal compensation shall be paid before March 31, 1972, even if a province does not participate in this plan. Let us have some clarification.

Mr. Choquette: This can be improved.

Mr. Grégoire: It can be improved? Well, if the hon. member for Lotbinière says: "It can be improved"; let him rise and make it binding upon the minister to improve the matter—

Mr. Choquette: I am just a private member.

Mr. Grégoire:—or let him move an amendment. Can the minister then clarify the situation? I would ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen)—I am not quite sure whether the minister now has his earpiece on to hear the interpretation—whether he proposes to amend clause 8 of the bill, so that, if a province refuses to participate in the plan, as soon as it comes into force, such province should get fiscal compensation? Could the minister answer yes or no whether it is his intention to move an amendment? I see the minister shaking his head. Now, this is the strongest denial thrown in the very face of the hon. member for Lotbinière, from his own minister. Therefore, if Quebec refuses to participate in the plan prior to 1972, it will pay without getting any fiscal compensation in exchange. What are Quebec members going to do?

Mr. Choquette: The future will prove the contrary.

Mr. Grégoire: Then they may as well call the Minister of National Health and Welfare a liar.

Mr. Speaker, the minister who is responsible, who has much more responsibilities than the hon. member for Lotbinière, has just stated that there will not be any change. Over four or five years, Quebec will pay taxes without getting anything in exchange, if it should decide not to participate in the plan. And I urge Quebec not to take part in this plan and to develop its own medicare plan.

Mr. Speaker, under the circumstances and in view of the unbending attitude of the minister, can a member from Quebec in all conscience vote for such a bill? I say no. The premier of Quebec asked all the federal members of Parliament from Quebec to unite