

Medicare

see made, but we are supporting the bill as it now stands.

We have before us not only the legislation brought down by the government but the amendment moved by the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) on behalf of the Progressive Conservative party. I should like the house to look closely at this amendment; and realize its full implications as explained by the various speakers who have spoken in support of its contentions.

It begins by saying that all the words after "that" should be deleted, and the words being deleted are: "That Bill C-227 be now read the second time". In other words, this amendment would kill the bill before us. This amendment would remove the medical care insurance legislation.

• (4:00 p.m.)

When the hon. member for Simcoe East, for whom I have a very high regard, made his speech he began by chiding the government for postponing the legislation for one year. With that, I heartily agree. But he then proceeded to move an amendment which will defer medical care insurance for many years, and perhaps forever in this country. May I point out that it is very strange that the Progressive Conservative party should seek to destroy this legislation which came about as the result of a royal commission set up by the Diefenbaker administration. That commission brought down what, in my opinion, is probably the finest elucidation of comprehensive health insurance that has been produced in our lifetime, and the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) gave the report of that commission his wholehearted blessing at the time it was made public. I therefore find it difficult to understand why the Progressive Conservatives should now be against this legislation.

I would remind hon. members from Saskatchewan, all of whom are Progressive Conservatives, that the passage of this legislation as it now stands would mean that, starting July 1 next the province of Saskatchewan would be entitled, under its medicare program, to \$11 million or \$12 million a year from the federal treasury, and that this amount would increase progressively as other health services were added under a comprehensive health insurance program.

The saving of \$11 million or \$12 million a year to the Saskatchewan treasury would enable the government of that province either to remove the personal premiums, which bring in about 25 per cent of the cost, which

[Mr. Douglas.]

is roughly \$20 million a year—and in addition enable it to wipe out one percentage point of the sales tax which goes to finance this program—or the government of Saskatchewan could use this \$12 million a year for the purpose of doing medical research, training doctors, and establishing community clinics. Therefore I think the members who come from Saskatchewan will have to do some explaining as to why they are opposing a piece of legislation which would have such beneficial effects for their province.

In the amendment there are a number of objectives set forth. The first is in clause (a) which requires that before medicare is proceeded with the federal government must secure the co-operation of the governments of the provinces of Canada.

Mr. McIntosh: Would the hon. member allow a question?

Mr. Douglas: Yes.

Mr. McIntosh: He has made several references to Saskatchewan and left the insinuation that maybe some Saskatchewan members have opposed certain parts of this measure. Would he please name those members who have opposed it?

Mr. Douglas: We will see who opposes the measure when the amendment comes to a vote. I am pointing out that the amendment clearly says this bill shall not be read a second time, and the passing of the amendment would destroy this medicare legislation. If the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. McIntosh) does not vote for the amendment, then of course my remark does not apply to him. He will have to make his own decision when the vote comes.

Mr. McIntosh: It does not apply if I vote for the amendment, either.

Mr. Douglas: My hon. friend should read the amendment and try to understand it, and if he cannot understand it he should have somebody explain it to him.

The alternative proposals made by the opposition are, first, that the federal government, before passing this measure, must secure the co-operation of the governments of the provinces of Canada. I want to point out that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) has said that six provinces have already agreed, and that he has every reason to believe that before July