

*Adjournment Debate*

with AIDS. I have complained about provinces which refuse to cover the cost of recommended drugs under medicare. I want to read an excerpt from a letter from Dr. Eric Jeffries of Vancouver about the Department's protocol requirements. He and others are concerned about the ethics and practicality of the so-called double-blind trials which the federal Department is suggesting. He says:

I understand that an aerosolized form of Pentamidine as a prophylaxis against *Pneumocystis pneumonia* is to be introduced in a double-blind trial.

—double-blind trials are largely used to compare a new drug with a similar drug which is in use. The new drug may be more effective or have fewer side-effects but the problem is to check if there is an improvement over the proven drug.

With P.C.P. we know the median life expectancy. It seems to me ethically unacceptable to waste time by performing a double-blind trial at this stage of paucity of information on AIDS. Double-blind refinements should wait.

On March 24, in a letter to the Minister, I raised the issue of the ethics of clinical trials for AIDS treatment drugs in Canada. I quoted the stand formally adopted by the B.C. Civil Liberties Association:

An adult person confronting the catastrophe of proximate certain death has a right to elect, for themselves, any medical treatment whatsoever that does not cause direct harm to others.

The Civil Liberties Association also stated:

We are aware of the view that the single and individual patient with a rare catastrophic illness represents an "emergency", while a large group of patients with the same catastrophic illness represents an opportunity for a clinical trial which could be compromised if they claimed and exercised catastrophic rights.

... As things stand, however, we regard it as nonsensical for catastrophic patients to cede their rights to self-determination in their treatment because of what can be seen to be little more than an institutional affection for the ideology of research rather than its vigorous pursuit.

Surely the National Health and Welfare bureaucracy can credit clinical trial data collected in the U.S. and Europe without laboriously duplicating research work already adequately done while Canadians are dying. This is not a scientific or a medical problem; this is purely a bureaucratic problem.

In closing, my colleagues and I acknowledge the Government's recent announcement. However, we want more details on these proposals. We want assurances that the money and effort will be well spent.

• (1820)

**Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I reject categorically the allegation that the Government is somehow deliberately delaying the application of money to the AIDS program. Those types of allegations are quite silly. No Government of whatever stripe is going to deliberately delay the application of funds for research on AIDS.

The Member pointed out that the United States is spending \$1.3 billion and that on a proportionate basis Canada should be spending \$103 million. The Minister has announced that we are spending \$168 million at the federal level alone. If we add to that the provincial contributions, it is far more per capita

than even in the United States where the problem is much worse than it is here in Canada. It is certainly a lot more than the per capita expenditure in the socialist countries of which the Member is aware. As usual, Canada is right at the front line in solving a very major problem. For the Member to make that allegation against the Government only points out that she is really quite silly.

The federal Government's AIDS program reflects a diversity and flexibility of response found in few other responses to the AIDS problem, whether among the provinces or by other nations. Those qualities remain an integral feature of the national AIDS program. Another key dimension to the program is the importance given to co-operation and partnership with other organizations, including the provincial Governments. All these activities under the national AIDS program contribute to the broad question of education, some in ways not readily apparent.

Research is vital to addressing not only the factual content of education programs, but also to determining the social and behavioural context in which the key questions of prevention and understanding must be resolved. For example, the national study of adolescents now being carried out by Queen's University with federal Government funding is expected to provide dramatic intelligence on adolescent knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour which will directly influence AIDS education for young people.

Formal professional training at the frontiers of virology and immunology is crucial if Canada is to keep pace with the pursuit of new treatments, a cure, or a vaccine for AIDS. The funding given to research activities contributes to meeting this need.

In the health, social, and allied services the quality of professional skills such as counselling and psycho-social support is a prime determinant in the ability of these service providers to impart preventive education in terms that individuals will understand and absorb, whatever their background and circumstances.

Community based AIDS organizations have been on the front line of the daily battle against AIDS since the beginning. Their efforts to deliver candid, relevant, life-saving education to a widening circle of Canadians deserve great credit and respect. In many cases, the financing so critical to the survival of these organizations has come from one source, the Government of Canada.

The same applies to the public education and awareness campaign of the Canadian Public Health Association. Here, federal funds are being used to bring the message of prevention to the broad spectrum of the Canadian public. This will be considerably expanded by increased direct federal efforts in this field.

We are active on the international scene. It is universally recognized that more needs to be done. We are facing an issue that challenges us on many fronts, and no nation on earth has