

Old Age Security Act Amendment

enough, they are also supplied with a medical card under which practically all their medical requirements are met. I know the minister will say that we have the medicare plan. However, that plan will not come into effect for another 18 months. If those people who now receive the supplement from the provincial government of Alberta receive \$30 a month more under this plan, they will lose most of the provincial supplement and also their medical cards.

This has happened so often in the past. I have had a great deal to do with all kinds of relief and pensions in the province of Alberta and have found this is always the case. When income increases a little, the medical card is withdrawn and they lose their supplement. I am wondering what the minister is going to do about those people who lose their medical cards. The supplement will be lost for sure, and in practically all cases the medical card will be taken away from them.

I suggest to the minister that until the medicare plan comes into effect and reaches the stage where it means something to the people who require help, he will have to supply a medical card to the people receiving old age security. An alternative program must be provided for these people until the medicare plan covers their requirements for hospitalization, medicines, doctors' bills and all the other things connected with medical treatment. I shall be glad if the minister will answer this question.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Chairman, because it is a card provided by the provincial government and not by the federal government—

Mr. Fane: I know that.

Mr. MacEachen: —there is no way in which, through this legislation, we could replace a card that had been taken away. All I can say is that under the Canada Assistance Plan we share in the full range of medical expenses of pensioners who receive supplementation under that plan. If the province of Alberta proceeded in this way we could participate in providing the whole range of health services to persons eligible for benefit under the Canada Assistance Plan. I think this is a way that may open the door to overcome what my hon. friend sees as a problem.

Mr. Fane: Such as those people who will lose the medical cards that they now possess?

[Mr. Fane.]

Mr. MacEachen: I am not fully aware of the circumstances under which the province provides these medical cards. I would want to know a good deal more about it before I could be definite. All I am saying is that persons receiving supplementation under the Canada Assistance Plan are eligible for the whole range of health services shareable by the federal government.

Mr. Fane: With no part of the cost coming out of their \$105 a month?

Mr. MacEachen: If they are supplemented beyond the \$105 under the Canada Assistance Plan, yes.

Mr. Pugh: Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the minister a supplementary question. We all know that that the medicare plan will not come into effect until July 1, 1968. What happens in the meantime? Before the minister answers that question, I point out that today many old people are being hospitalized and will have to buy drugs. This situation will also prevail after January 1, 1967. Many people will be supplied with glasses under the provincial plan. These things are additives to the supplement paid by the province of British Columbia.

This comes back to the question I asked earlier. What happens to these people if the province says, we are sorry but with the additional \$30 your income has now exceeded the limit under which these things are provided. Therefore the expensive operation you had, the drugs you require, the glasses with which you have been provided, have to be paid for by you. We find that you owe us \$1,242.53.

I am picking that figure out of the air, but it could be the case. In answer to the hon. member for Vegreville the minister said he did not know about this card business and what the province of Alberta would do. It is the minister's duty, and a very strong one, to know what the province will do before we pass this legislation. He should know the effects of the legislation on the provincial governments. He should know how they are going to treat the legislation. Surely he could obtain assurance from each and every provincial authority that until the plan gets into full swing no one will be penalized because of payments already made to people by the provinces. The minister says he has no control over the provinces. Is the minister so far removed from the rest of Canada and the provincial governments that he does not know how they will react to this program?