

course, happily, emergency cases are generally handled quickly and taken care of, but acute cases, cases requiring an operation, sometimes these must be booked months in advance. For example, in Victoria it can be said that they have to wait six months, and I say this of my own personal knowledge. This suggests to me that there is still a great need for hospitals and hospital beds so that medicare can be properly administered in our hospitals, and nurses and doctors trained. There is also a need for a greater variety of hospital facilities, acute, intermediate, and chronic care.

Is this the time then, Madam Speaker, to cut back on assistance to the provinces, which is designed to help them meet their medical and hospital needs? I suggest quite the opposite is the case. With needs still pressing, with construction costs rising, with a government refusing to eliminate the tax on building materials, this is no time to trim back programs which, however unwillingly, were undertaken in the end in good faith 10 or 20 years ago by the provinces. This is what this legislation proposes to do.

I am at a loss to understand the government's priorities or whether it has any at all. This is certainly no time to trim programs. In a time of inflation when charges for medicare are increasing and the means whereby provinces can raise funds to meet these charges are not increasing, the federal government chooses to draw back on its program. What is needed, of course, is a proper balance between acute, intermediate, and chronic care facilities, all of which cases have to be housed in order that medicare can be administered. If once we can get to that position it might be more rational for the federal government to back out gently on a phased program from its earlier undertakings. But a proper balance is still a long way off.

Because it is a long way off, the existing hospital situation is being aggravated. Chronic care patients and patients convalescing are occupying acute bed space. The truth of the matter is that the government has done nothing to get hospital needs sorted out, thereby reducing pressures that are being exerted on acute bed facilities and permitting medicare to be properly administered to all Canadians, as was the original intention. I say this is no time to cop out. Therefore I am concerned in the first place with the drastic cutback of a needed program. This I find quite unacceptable. The amendment before us proposes a six months' hoist. Perhaps such a period would enable the government to reflect and to change its approach to this whole question, and for this reason I support the amendment.

My second concern about this measure, one closely related to the amendment and the need for a six months' delay before proceeding with this bill, has to do with the manner in which this federal cop out took place. In the minister's opening remarks we heard that lengthy consultations took place. Oh yes, they were well advertised. We had people in the conference centre and many discussions took place between federal and provincial ministers of health. Indeed the matter was raised, I am almost certain, when the premiers met with the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau).

These consultations were presumably designed to reach some sort of consensus. Then without any forewarning whatsoever, in a budget statement on June 23 last year, pop goes the weasel, and a cop out is upon us. Without any

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warning, without telling the provinces what it was going to do, the federal government decided to back out. This legislation is the implementation of that undertaking in the budget speech.

If one could give credence to the statements of the government, Madam Speaker, it prides itself on its record of consulting before acting. It says it floats notions ostensibly to get feedback. But if we look behind those statements to the facts, we find quite a different situation. It consulted in the Liberal sense, in the sense that this government consults on the matter of price and wage controls. We all remember the discussions that were held before the implementation, the coming, or the appearance of Bill C-73. They presumed to have consultation on these matters and then, having encountered a pretty resounding opposition from labour, management, and the provinces, without any warning, zap—down comes C-73, the anti-inflation measure drafted by Draco himself. Draco, for those who are interested, having been the archon of Athens in 621 B.C., whose code of laws is described—

● (1540)

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order, please. I am afraid that now the hon. member is straying from the amendment.

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Madam Speaker, I was using this illustration of simple draconian measures as one form of consultation to justify the fact that this government pretends to consult but does not.

If I may continue, however, the consultation process, so-called, has taken place in other areas. I have noticed consultation on matters of airports, presumably to strengthen security measures. After full consultation what happened? They dispensed with commissionaires, hired and gave short-term training to recruits who were dressed up to look all the world like RCMP constables. I am sure they are not fully trained RCMP personnel, but this is the form of consultation. It is not consultation. The decision was taken long beforehand. They have consulted on other matters of airports, but in order to spare being called to order again I will continue.

In the final Viet Nam caper there was a form of consultation, if you like. There was the suggestion that there ought to be a group of members of parliament go over to Viet Nam to see if the situation warranted the participation of Canada. I am satisfied that the decision was taken before that delegation set out.

This time on medicare they claim to have consulted à la Libérale. The minister described how often he and his homologues had consulted with his provincial counterparts and with the premiers of the provinces, with all this discussion about a new formula for medicare. Why did they bother to consult? I have asked myself this on other occasions. It is patent now, this is the Liberal way. It is façade, window dressing, cosmetic and spurious, because they know all along what they are going to do. They had decided to get out, and now they are getting out, after all those glowing promises of ten years ago. Would Mr. Pearson approve? Would he have conducted himself this way at this time? Would he renege as this government is reneging, and in this manner, under the cover of consulta-