

Medicare

helped under the medical care scheme as much as someone who is treated by those who are designated today as physicians.

I think that it is nothing but segregation as far as all the insured services are concerned and that is nothing new, because I have always been against that group which pretends to be the only one to serve society and which forgets all the paramedical services which are sometimes as necessary, if not more, than those rendered by physicians.

We wholeheartedly support that amendment and I hope that those discussions will bring to light all the deficiencies which have resulted from the meaning of the word "medical practitioner" and that from now on its meaning will be extended to make it possible to say that a medical practitioner is someone who looks after the welfare of the human being.

[*English*]

Mr. Groos: Mr. Chairman, I would like to enter this debate for a few moments because my sympathies are very definitely with the members who have spoken on this subject. I realize the minister must take a stand, but I wonder if some sort of compromise could be affected. I am thinking in particular of the payment of bills for services provided by optometrists, dentists who do oral surgery, and so forth, if these services are performed as a result of patients being referred to these people by a medical practitioner.

I understand that the medical profession is vastly overworked at present and that a great many services are being performed by paramedical personnel. I also understand that under provincial medical plans a number of these services are included and are paid for by the provinces. I wish to ask the minister if a compromise could not be reached on the matter.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Chairman, in speaking to the point of order I wish to say that the people of B.C. would take a very dim view if this amendment were ruled out of order. After being told that in order to get a partial medicare scheme we must have the co-operation of the provinces, now the minister is telling the provinces precisely what they can and cannot have as medical services under the scheme.

I wish to bring up a specific case in point respecting a society which was not mentioned in the amendment proposed by my colleague, the Naturopathic Physicians' Association. A

lot of people think that naturopathic physicians practice something like witchcraft, but I would like to read into the record a telegram which I have received from the president of the Association of Naturopathic Physicians of British Columbia. It reads in part as follows:

For many years naturopathic physicians in B.C. have enjoyed acceptance of their services by major insurance companies, health services, Workmen's Compensation Board, government employees' medical services and more recently by the government of B.C. medical plan and the M.S.A. Exclusion or restriction of the services of this profession in any national medical care plan would constitute an act of gross injustice and discrimination.

In the first part of the telegram, it points out that British Columbia naturopathic physicians have consistently rendered valuable public service, practising under legislation which has been revised from time to time in keeping with the advancing progress of medicine and its practice in Canada.

I must admit that I have never had a naturopath attend me, nor any of my relatives, and so do not have personal experience in this matter. But the fact is that the Naturopathic Physicians Association of B.C. is included under the provincial medical services plan. Therefore it seems to me that the minister and this committee would be very foolish to try to dictate to the people of that province what kind of services can be included in a national medicare plan. It would be particularly foolish in view of the fact that the hon. member for Simcoe East has consistently spoken about the shortage of doctors, and about how doctors are overworked.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chairman, I have just one point to make which might be helpful to the minister in his consideration of what should be included under the definition of medical practitioner. If he checks the income tax act he will find that "medical expenses" covers work performed by dentists, optometrists, chiropractors, and goes on to list all the other professions involved. For the minister to say that this association referred to in the amendment cannot by any stretch of the imagination be included under the definition given in the paragraph, is completely unfounded. I suggest that he take a leaf out of the Income Tax Act.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Chairman, I wish to begin by pointing out that we are dealing with a procedural point and not with the desirability of services provided by members of the health professions. The point at issue is whether the amendment moved by the hon. member for Hamilton South is beyond the