

Medicare

It is, therefore, primarily a financial measure, and consequently, is not intended to cover all cases or all details of the plans; these are left to the provinces. They will adapt what programs and services their respective populations wish to have. This is a financial measure intended to establish uniformity on four well known basic principles: the plan will be public, transferable from one province to another, universal and, up to a point, compulsory.

To my mind, today's debate would make sense only to the extent where we would be discussing whether the federal measure should cover care other than strictly medical care. I submit, Mr. Chairman, that such a debate should be held by the legislative assembly when a provincial medical care insurance plan is being passed. The purpose of this financial measure is not to define the qualifications of those who will give medical care but merely to limit the federal contribution to the basic expenses incurred by the provinces, that is, the cost of medical care provided by medical practitioners.

I am convinced, Mr. Chairman, as the members surely are also, that as citizens of the Canadian provinces, whether it be under existing programs or programs to be established, we wish to see the most extensive care possible to be given and paid for by our various provincial governments. I should be happy, as a citizen of that province, to see Quebec adopt a plan wide enough in coverage to enable one to be reimbursed by the province for all expenses incurred, not only for doctors' care, but also for the services given by all other specialists; the plan should also cover drugs, which represent considerable medical expenses.

● (5:50 p.m.)

But from a federal point of view, this bill is precisely designed to prompt the provinces to participate in a medical insurance plan. The federal government is willing to repay, under certain conditions laid down in the bill, 50 per cent of the total expenditures incurred with regard to medical services rendered by physicians.

Mr. Chairman, the amendment moved by the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Douglas) would enable the minister and the cabinet to extend the services covered under the federal plan. I do not know how the government and the minister will view this amendment. I feel personally that if the house is willing to surrender some of its rights to the executive, without amending the

legislation subsequently, then it is up to the house to determine whether it is wise and fair to allow more latitude to the government in return for extending the coverage of services provided in the bill now before us.

I only wished to remind the house during this discussion about extending medical services that, in my opinion, we have before us a supply bill designed to prompt the provinces to enter a field, or at least to meet four basic requirements, in order to be eligible for federal assistance, and all details, including the extension of services, concern the provinces. It is up to them to determine which specialists will be qualified under provincial plans.

I submit, Mr. Chairman, that the bill in its present form, and considering the substantial financial contribution involved in medical care, will surely achieve its purpose, that is, implement in every Canadian province plans which, as a citizen of the province of Quebec, I hope will be as extensive as possible and cover, in addition to medical services, all other specialized services which may prove useful to us.

[English]

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that we are now in a vacuum to some extent in that an amendment has been moved by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam, yet the suggestion was made that if the minister is in some doubt as to its acceptability we should defer discussion of the amendment. Accordingly, further discussion of this amendment seems to have been postponed by general consent. I suggest to you, and to the committee, that this is not a very satisfactory situation, as far as I am concerned at any rate. I find it difficult to make a meaningful contribution in respect of paragraph (d) until a decision has been made as to the acceptability of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam. If it is accepted I believe there should be a further amendment, but there does not seem to be any point in moving that further amendment now, or discussing it as a separate subject, in view of the fact that the amendment before us may be ruled out of order or rejected. We are not even discussing that amendment itself.

There are other important matters in clause 2 which should be considered, and I am prepared to move that paragraph (d) stand until such time as the question regarding the amendment is settled. In the meantime we should move on to paragraphs (e) and (f).