

of confrontation with the provinces, and this is the same thing. It is historical. It is endemic, and a disease which I think is bred into the party sitting on the other side.

What is the stance of the provinces? It is very interesting that in not one address given by hon. members on the government side which I have read have they made reference to the fact that there is not one provincial government in this nation which has approved of this bill. Surely there must be some province, perhaps a little one like Prince Edward Island, or a big, wealthy one like Alberta, which feels that it can stand the gaff, but that is not the point. The point is, who will this type of program affect? It will affect the poor. And who are the poor? They are the sick. I have said before in this House in debate on this same bill that the sick get sicker, the poor get poorer, and the pensioner gets it in the neck because he is often the one who is both poor and sick.

What options has the government offered? I noted with interest last night in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs that the minister made a remark with regard to guaranteed annual income, that carrot he has been dangling before the Canadian public for many years. In making reference to that I can only ask, when he feels the Canadian people and the government can afford it and when it does come in, how long will it be before there is a deduction for medical costs or a deduction because of pensions, old age, veterans or whatever?

Why can the government not introduce legislation concerning the health of Canadians which it knows will be valid, stop messing around with the health of Canadians, and stick to its guns? Why get into a program of a guaranteed annual income if the government cannot afford it? If only there were some hon. members on the other side of the House who would just take the time in caucus to ask the minister why this is going on and why the Conservatives, members of the NDP, and the Creditistes are speaking so vehemently and sincerely about this bill. Are hon. members opposite afraid of a little self-examination?

I congratulate those hon. members on the government side who have contributed in debate. It at least indicates that they have done some measure of homework, but frankly I think that the majority of hon. members opposite just do not care. They do not understand the thrust or effect of the bill. They do not recognize the fact there is not a province in Canada which approves of the bill. They do not accept the fact that there is not a medical association, be it federal or provincial, which accepts the bill. They do not understand that there is not a paramedical organization in Canada which approves or endorses this bill. They do not understand these things because they have not bothered to pay attention. Well, so be it.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has said in committee and in the House—and how true it is—that you do not mess around with the health care of Canadians without the chickens coming home to roost. Hon. members opposite cannot say they have not been warned, and it will be the ultimate delight for me to see those chickens come home to roost when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) faces the people in the next federal election.

Now I am prepared to answer the question of the hon. member for Trinity.

Business of the House

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite correct when he points out that this bill has not gone to committee. That is the point of today's exercise, I trust.

However, is the hon. member aware that the provisions of Bill C-68 were foreshadowed in the June, 1975, budget when guidelines were laid down, and that acceptance of those guidelines was indicated by the president of the Canadian Medical Association when he appeared before the standing committee, I believe in October, 1975?

Mr. Brisco: Mr. Speaker, I think I can confirm in part what the hon. member has said, having served on the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs since I came into this House in July of 1974. I and all hon. members of this House are well aware that that allusion was made by the then minister of finance, now Mr. Turner, but the simple fact remains that if the hon. member for Trinity would care to read the documentation and the material available from the Canadian Medical Association at this time, its posture has indeed changed, and I can well understand why.

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, in line with my usual philosophy, since I understand there are probably at least two other hon. members who wish to speak before the debate closes at 5:35, I will try to shorten my remarks, make my points as quickly as possible, make points which I do not think have been adequately explored here this afternoon, and leave aside the temptation to go down the trails which have been trodden so many times before, although through very exceptional speeches. I have no quarrel with any one of them, though I have some quarrels with some of the ideas which have been expressed in them.

First I should like to make the point—and it really is the role of an opposition in a very major debate and one which does not come along very often in any session of parliament—and to ask the question, how far is an opposition allowed to go to express its displeasure with a measure which is proposed by the government? Perhaps it becomes a little more complicated when one is dealing with a person such as the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde). I have decided to make my argument on a generality, however, and not allow myself to get sidetracked by the personal preferences and disposition or way of doing things that certain of the ministry have followed; so I shall take it as a general issue and not mention the Minister of National Health and Welfare in the next ten minutes.

● (1710)

The measure we are debating amounts to one-sided divorce, Mr. Speaker, that is, it is a decision by one of the partners to a federal-provincial partnership in the field of health care to change its role, to change the amount of money it is willing to put into the partnership. It has done this, as far as I can see, without the blessing of any one of the provincial governments, or the two territories. If someone cannot get up in this place and make an argument about that sort of arbitrary procedure, we are not worthy of being considered a parliament at all.

I think the point that has been missed by those who say that once a government proposes a measure and it has been