

*Medicare*

felt it was our duty to help underdeveloped countries because all the nations in the world are interdependent, we should apply the same principle at home and the rich provinces should be ready to contribute to the cost of this legislation to help the poorer provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I come back, therefore, to what I was saying earlier. What struck me most was the constitutional argument, and I quoted texts earlier to show that this argument is serious and valid, that it must on no account be dismissed, and that those who, by profession or experience, qualify as defenders of the constitution, must recall it at every opportunity. We must not forget that the most important objective which must be reached as soon as possible is the revision of the constitution and its explanation in some cases to prevent a recurrence of the present clashes and duplication. I think this is something which should be repeated.

Mr. Speaker, even if this is repetitious, I do not believe this bill should be blocked, and I was glad to see that my colleague from Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard) did not seem to oppose the bill in his remarks either, but merely wished to sound the alarm, which he did with a competence which, for my part, I do not possess.

But this leads me to say that my own province is worried, and with good reason, about the fiscal adjustments. In my opinion, there are two kinds of fiscal adjustments, Mr. Speaker. There is one which might mean that, as soon as the bill is implemented, the federal government would give the province the amount of money it would normally be entitled to and expect it to make do with it. It would very likely be the ideal solution.

And I remember that we asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen)—when the resolution concerning that bill was passed and as a matter of fact I asked him myself—if he would be willing to consider granting a fiscal adjustment to the province of Quebec.

I remember that the minister did not give us a satisfactory answer then. He did not seem ready to accept the principle of a fiscal adjustment with regard to the provinces which, for constitutional or other reasons, cannot accept the bill as it is. I was struck by an article which appeared, shortly afterwards, in a newspaper, *Le Devoir* of July 15, 1966, written by Miss Françoise Côté and entitled:

Medicare—Even if its plan goes into effect after July 1967, Quebec will be able to obtain the fiscal equivalent.

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It is reported that the minister, in reply to a question, was not too explicit, far from it; but, on the other hand, a spokesman—I am now quoting, Mr. Speaker—a spokesman from the office of the Canadian Minister of Health was more explicit on the procedure concerning the fiscal equivalent which will be available to the provinces after the 1972 revision.

It goes on to say that it will not be necessary for a province to have had its medicare plan in operation for five years, that is since July 1, 1967, to obtain the fiscal equivalent. The plan will have to have been in operation for a sufficient number of years to permit a full appraisal of its cost. It would seem that the minister has changed his mind somewhat since then and that he is concerned himself with this question of fiscal compensation.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, because of my education, my background, atavism and what I have been doing all my life, I believe that, important as those fiscal matters may be, they should not delay the passage of such a momentous bill which will mean so much once it becomes law. Rather, we must try to find an acceptable formula, for the time being, attempt to improve it from year to year so that eventually every province will have its own revenues and will attend to its own affairs. I think conditions are nevertheless improving since the province of Quebec has had its commission on taxation since the federal government has reconsidered its position. I think that, eventually, the convening of other federal-provincial conferences will be requested and that such an ideal goal will probably be sought in the end, but I still believe that the benefits of this legislation must not be delayed. It is to be hoped that the government will not consider this as an accomplished fact and say: "Well, you accepted that kind of compromise, why not accept another one?"

I, like everybody else, have heard very categorical statements from certain politicians of my own province, such as hon. Mr. Bertrand or hon. Mr. Couturier. There are even some in other provinces who say that they will not accept any condition laid down by the federal government. Again, one cannot blame them, as they are the custodians of those prerogatives which are basic, in my opinion. But, in spite of that, I think it would be possible to find an acceptable formula which, even if it were not perfect upon the inception of the act, could, since there is still a year and a half or two years ahead of us to improve upon, be improved, as far as