

*Medical Care Act*

And thus, having interfered for a long time in matters which should not properly be under its jurisdiction, the federal government sometimes gets tied up in quite inappropriate legislation. In my opinion, this is the case with this legislation, for in fact, Madam Speaker, why do not we give back to whom they belong the responsibilities in the matters under their jurisdiction. And if the federal government is collecting too much money through income tax and other levies, if it feels it has to interfere in issues which would normally be under the exclusive authority of the provinces, then let us make the necessary amendments and give back to the provinces the appropriate sums of money to help them meet their own responsibilities. That is what we should be speaking about rather than try to plan or coordinate the health services for the whole country.

Another point which I feel has been forgotten and on which we are not dwelling, or at least not enough, is the fact that by the very nature of the amendment proposed by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde), a fundamental and obvious principle is questioned: Can we play with health? In this area more than in any other, should we not rather insist exclusively on the needs, and in no way limit ourselves to medical care, most of all under the fallacious pretext of material and financial considerations?

I find it abominable to suggest that expenditures can be curtailed in this area and potentialities of improvement must be limited in as essential a field as health. I believe the minister has not adequately considered the implications of such a move. Will it not result, for instance, in the fact that people will say: Well, it is too bad, but we cannot get the medicare we need because the law prevents us from spending such an amount of money in this field? Will this type of reasoning not lead a great many individuals of this country to wonder whether this inflation control does not finally mean the suppression of a number of citizens?

Madam Speaker, one can reach all sorts of conclusions when one questions as basic a principle as people's health. All the more so that I do not really believe that in a country as large as Canada, in an impossible country geographically speaking, we could find ideal formulas? How could we possibly settle in exactly the same way health problems in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Quebec, British Columbia or Ontario? To think it possible, is in my view, to make the following judgment: We must leave it to each of these areas to administer efficiently the field of health and all we need do is favour each of these areas in the country so that they can provide adequate, appropriate and efficient care. Several hon. members in this House have mentioned for example that there is a lack of physicians in some regions. Elsewhere there is a lack of hospitals or clinical centres for example. One realizes there are so many disparities and there is so much diversity between the different areas that it is impossible to establish financial and monetary standards according to which the quality of care to be provided to ill people would be the least restricted.

● (1610)

This is why I am urging the minister and the federal government to consider the possibility of continuing negotiations with the provinces to come to an agreement which would enable them to get better organized rather

[Mr. Matte.]

than forcing them through financial control to go as far as to reconsider the expenditures to be made in this area. Can the province of Quebec for instance afford to prevent the increase in the number of physicians which should provide better service to all the areas of Quebec? This is an example but of course all other areas in the country face the same problem. It seems to me the federal government cannot allow that. Some people say that this is not what we are aiming at, that we are simply trying to prevent squandering and abuses. That is all very well but shall we forget in the process what is the very purpose of health care? I do not think so and this is why I believe this bill may bring health care to a standstill and impede the progress which should constantly be made in that field. In other words, it may jeopardize national health, nothing less.

That is why I am against this bill and I would of course have preferred an announcement by the minister that a formal agreement has been drawn up with the provinces, which would give them much more leeway to settle all the health problems for the benefit of all areas throughout the country. Solving these problems should not entail economic cuts but on the contrary applying to the field of health care the exceptional policy of unrestricted expenses to meet the public need and not to beat inflation. In other words, if there is an area which should not be affected by the fight against inflation, it is definitely health care. Since this bill is an anti-inflation legislation, I believe we are on the wrong course and the minister should seek another solution.

**Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette):** Madam Speaker, it will have been of some use. I see that even now some of my colleagues across the way seem to be in great shape. I hope to hear them speak to Bill C-68 later on, Madam Speaker. I have already had the opportunity of speaking to this bill so I shall be rather brief.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. La Salle:** I feel this is one of the best opportunities we could have of inviting the minister to reconsider his bill, to reconsider his position. What is important today is not the resignation my colleagues speak of, but Bill C-68. That is what is important!

So, Madam Speaker, having already spoken to this bill, and deplored the attitude of the government which seems to want it passed on the double, and knowing full well that, even as I speak to you now the provinces feel that this bill is anything but interesting for them, I believe that in the context of federalism whose advantages we tend to laud so readily, meeting the needs of the provinces and finding an equitable solution to allow them to co-operate fully with government are a matter of principal. But that is not the situation at the present time.

Yesterday, the parliamentary secretary, and I say I take advantage of this amendment, among others, which requests a six months' hoist. I have already asked the minister whether it might not be wise for him to have the unanimous agreement of the provinces, and a solution which may not be easy to imagine. I do not infer that the minister made no effort to get a positive reaction from the provinces,—but as he did not yet get their agreement, I think that as a representative of a political party, as a