

*Medicare*

that the argument of the minister is totally wrong; I believe he made a very logical and intelligent argument—in such circumstances I should give the hon. member who proposes the amendment the benefit of that doubt. Therefore, with respect to hon. members, and particularly to the minister who made such a strong argument in support of his point of view, I will accept the amendment and say that it is receivable at this time.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said a while ago that we had plenty of time for consideration of the bill now before us, namely Bill No. C-227. Indeed, considering that this legislation cannot come into force before July 1, 1968, we have plenty of time to debate it. We practically have two and a half years, or at least two years, to discuss the contents of a bill which does not mean much in itself.

Indeed this bill is entitled:

An act to authorize the payment of contributions by Canada toward the cost of insured medical care services incurred by provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans.

Therefore this means that the province or provinces have a duty or an obligation to have medical care plans of their own. And then the federal government, in the spirit of Bill No. C-227, will contribute towards the cost of insured services.

Under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) should have introduced his bill this afternoon for an immediate increase in old age pension benefits in Canada. Inquiries coming from all parts of the country ask when the government intends to put its old age security program into practice, and we are unable to give them a definite date.

The minister was telling me this afternoon that it would be introduced during the present session. The present session will come to a close around Christmas time, until then our old age pensioners will still be getting only \$75 a month. And the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) was telling us, the other day, that we were presently going through a very difficult period, an inflation era where the cost of living is continuously rising at an appreciable rate. But our pensioners must be content with a meagre \$75 per month allowance, with which to face this increase.

• (5:40 p.m.)

It seems to me that the Minister of National Health and Welfare would have shown objectivity, wisdom, and better understanding if he had asked us at the beginning of the present sitting to begin consideration of the bill to raise old age pensions to \$105 a month for those in need. But no; the minister tells us: we will study the bill entitled:

An act to authorize the payment of contributions by Canada toward the cost of insured medical care services incurred by provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans.

Mr. Speaker, I said it a little earlier; we still have two years before the coming into force of that scheme or that federal contribution to the provinces. In passing, allow me to say that the federal government will contribute to the costs incurred by the provinces to the extent that it has received from them money collected from taxes imposed on the working public, in short on the population of those provinces. It will contribute only after such taxation.

If through Bill No. C-227 we are to pay for a bureaucracy here in Ottawa, which will determine the amounts which the federal government will contribute to the cost of insured services provided by the provinces and if we have, on top of that, another provincial bureaucracy which sees or will see to the administration and application of a medicare insurance plan, then we will double the expenditures and the administration costs. In my opinion, that is what I find illogical. If the federal government must get those funds from the provinces' treasury to be able later, after having paid its bureaucracy, its administration, to give what is left to the provinces, it would be better if it withdrew completely from such schemes and left the provinces to administer themselves, which is what several provinces have asked in many cases.

Today, the Conservatives moved the following amendment:

This house, while of the opinion that provision should be made for medical services to be available to all Canadians at an adequate level on a pre-paid basis, is nevertheless of the further opinion that no legislation for the provision of insured medical care services in Canada will be satisfactory unless it:

(a) secures co-operation of the governments of the provinces of Canada.

That is precisely what has not been settled at this time. Federal-provincial conferences are held, in Ottawa or elsewhere, and the provinces object to one scheme or another submitted by the federal government; they