

Medicare

provinces pursuant to provincial medical care insurance plans—Mr. MacEachen—Mr. Batten in the chair.

On subclause (f)—“*Medical practitioner*”.

The Chairman: When the committee rose yesterday afternoon it was considering subclause (f) of clause 2 of the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Chairman, it has been said several times that, because of its importance and scope, we must give the bill under consideration much attention and study it in detail. Once again I want to remind the minister that because private health insurance plans now in force are ignored, the employees concerned and the workers in general will surely suffer.

Barely a few minutes ago I was speaking with one of my former fellow workers at the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in Saint-Hyacinthe and he pointed out to me that the 700 odd employees of that plant have their own insurance plan which gives them satisfaction. It is interesting to know, for instance, that the whole premium is paid by the employer; the employee does not contribute anything. Participation in the plan guarantees to all the plant workers a \$2,000 life insurance payable at death, and medical-surgical insurance, if my memory serves me right, of up to \$600 a year. The children and dependants of the worker are insured. All this is covered by negotiations between management and labour when the collective agreement is reviewed every two years.

To my mind, the hon. minister should not take these facts lightly; on the contrary, he should give them serious consideration.

May I repeat again, Mr. Chairman, that the amendments we are now proposing, the pressure we are bringing to bear on the minister so that he may accept them, do not stem from political interest or a desire to filibuster. We have but one goal, and that is to make this measure as nearly perfect as possible and to ensure that the greatest possible number of Canadians are covered. May I repeat also that the purpose of the minister should be to alleviate as much as possible the effects of poverty for, in the case of large families, medical and surgical care has become prohibitive. It is common knowledge that when the time comes to pay medical bills, the father of a large family, whose income is relatively low, always has problems.

Several of the former speakers have pointed out one aspect in particular to the minister. I

[**Mr. Pennell.**]

should, in turn, like to urge him to include optometrists' care in the plan. I have on hand two telegrams received today. The first reads as follows:

We urge legislators to include in Bill No. C-227 (medicare) visual services performed by optometrists to do justice to our graduates who undergo specialized training which is highly appreciated by the public.

The telegram, Mr. Chairman, is signed by Mr. J. A. Messier, director of Montreal university's school of optometry.

The other telegram reads as follows:

The Collège des optométristes of the province of Quebec, through its president, strongly protests against the exclusion of optometrists from Bill C-227.

The college has not been consulted in any way and, on the contrary, it denies the statement of minister MacEachen assuming that our optometrists are satisfied with his amendment.

To exclude optometrists from Bill C-227 would be prejudicial to the greater part of the Quebec population and particularly to that of Canada, which is larger.

And this telegram was signed by Mr. Pierre Crevier, O.D., president of the C.O.P.Q.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to repeat to the hon. minister that, by ignoring representations made to him by medical practitioners, here in this house and by spokesmen for the Quebec optometrists, he is doing the population a disservice. Eye specialists have a heavy agenda with appointments made weeks ahead of time. By refusing to acknowledge the services rendered to the people by optometrists, we are discriminating against this profession and we are also placing large families, more particularly, in an unfavourable position. If the minister and the government really have the interest of Canadians at heart, they can no longer stand against including in this bill the services referred to.

In closing, I ask the minister most earnestly to acknowledge the services given by optometrists.

● (3:30 p.m.)

[*English*]

Mr. Webb: Mr. Chairman, I do trust that the minister, having celebrated the feast of St. Andrew, will demonstrate greater flexibility in the continued debate on the bill than he has previously shown.

The Minister of Health and Welfare has been firm regarding the definition of a “medical practitioner” as a doctor of medicine, and the definition of “medical services” contained in the resolution, as only those medical care services which are rendered by a