

Medicare

own, there are clauses which provide for a certain number of specified drugs and many other things, such as in some cases chiropractic services or the services of optometrists. So I really do not see that it is up to this body to decide whether or not there shall be an additional provision for those who are financially unable to provide for their own medical services. That, as is clearly set out in clause 4 of the bill, must be included in an act of the legislature. It is this act of the legislature which will spell out in detail how the act is going to be administered, what will be included, what will be excluded, the means of collecting funds, and so on. It is not up to this parliament; it is up to the legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to keep the house very long. There are however a couple of points which I should like to bring out, with regard to the criteria laid down, which must be met before a provincial plan will be acceptable under this bill. Clause 4(1)(a) says among other things, that the plan must be administered and operated on a non-profit basis by a public authority. We do not disagree with that, except for the definition of what is a non-profit basis and what is a public authority. Subclause (2) of that same clause goes on to deal with it in this way:

Notwithstanding paragraph (a) of subsection (1), a plan established by an act of the legislature of a province does not fail to satisfy—

I should like to underline those words "does not fail to satisfy".

—the criteria set forth in that paragraph by reason only that it authorizes the designation by the provincial authority of an agency or agencies—

In two of the provinces with which I am most familiar, Alberta and British Columbia, Medical Services Incorporated, which is a non-profit organization, does in fact provide the major portion of the administrative detail. As I read this, it would appear that they would meet the criteria laid down. I think it would be useful if the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) would tell us whether or not organizations such as this, which have been set up in many provinces, do satisfactorily meet the criteria laid down in subclause (2) of clause 4. We would like to know this, because in Alberta and British Columbia it is working very satisfactorily. As I said, anyone who qualifies for any social welfare in any of its forms is provided with 100 per cent medical service coverage

[Mr. Olson.]

without any cost to that individual by way of premiums. In the case where an individual pays no income tax but perhaps has assets and does not qualify for social welfare, the province pays 80 per cent of the premium set up by M.S.I. which is, as I said before, a non-profit organization.

In respect of anyone who has a taxable income of from zero to \$500, the provincial government pays 50 per cent of the premium. In respect of a person who has a taxable income of between \$500 and \$1,000, the province pays 25 per cent of the premium. This is satisfactory; it is working. I hope the criteria laid down in subclauses (1)(a) and (2) of clause 4 will allow for this kind of administration of a provincial plan which will qualify for contributions by the federal government. So, Mr. Speaker, when we get to these clauses we intend to probe deeply into the minister's thinking in respect of this matter, so that we will know in advance whether or not the interpretation of what is written in this bill in fact will meet these things I have been talking about.

In addition to that, in closing I might add that we think this should be a health care insurance plan rather than a medical care insurance plan, and that it should include such things as optometrists and some or all of the chiropractic services which are required by a large number of people. We will come to that when we reach our clause by clause consideration.

• (5:40 p.m.)

In the meantime I suggest that a vote for the amendment before us is a vote against the principle that the federal government should make a financial contribution to medical insurance plans. We in this party know there are plans already in existence in various provinces, and we are in favour of the federal government making such a contribution to those plans.

Mr. D. R. Gundlock (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a great number of explanations about this plan and the proposed amendment. It is my belief that the amendment will make the plan more acceptable. That is my belief as a result of talking to my constituents and as a result of reading about the experience of those who have been laid down in subclauses (1) (a) and (2) of subjected to compulsory universal medical