

Medicare

expenditures, which will amount before too long to over \$1 billion a year, without imposing heavy additional taxation at both the federal and provincial levels. It is most unfair therefore to say that these plans are free. Nothing in this world is free.

There are not enough doctors and medical facilities available to make such a program available. I will not labour this point because the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Ry-nard), a practising medical doctor who understands the situation well from his daily practice of medicine, outlined it to the house very fully and thoroughly.

All we have to do is to go into the rural area of any riding and see whether they have a country doctor ministering to them. One would be surprised to find that many villages lack a medical doctor. One does not exaggerate when he refers to the great difficulty of obtaining a room in the hospital these days. Hospitals are crowded beyond description, and neither doctors nor medical facilities are available in sufficient numbers, to say nothing about the medical science and research in this field which are badly needed. I shall not dwell upon this aspect of the matter, because this subject has been well covered in the debate.

My fourth point is that I feel this bill, if instituted, would be very discriminatory. As I said before, the title refers to the cost of insured medical services. I maintain that the word "medical" should be changed to "health" because medical care services includes only those practising medicine. What about optometrists, ophthalmologists, chiropractors, osteopaths, physiotherapists, psychologists and dentists? All these people have spent years, at great cost, training themselves.

I understand it takes four years for an optometrist to learn his profession. There are around 1,500 of them in Canada, and only about 300 ophthalmologists. We therefore cannot say to an optometrist, a chiropractor or an osteopath: "You do not come into this plan because you do not qualify" because it will put these people entirely out of business.

I am sure each member has received representations on this subject. I should like to refer to a letter I received from an optometrist. It refers to clause 2 of the bill which

[Mr. Hales.]

outlines the terminology of "insured services", and as I mentioned leaves out all these people. The letter reads in part:

● (7:20 p.m.)

If the definition "medical practitioner" was amended to include optometrists, ophthalmologists, chiropractors, osteopaths, physiotherapists, psychologists and dentists, for the purpose of this act, the discriminatory aspect of this act would be removed.

It is unthinkable that the Canadian parliament would contemplate legislating any group of fellow Canadians out of business.

During that period 1939-1945 when the very existence of our nation was in jeopardy, optometrists served in all branches of the services. Some gave their lives, some were wounded and maimed, some merely gave up years of their lives—willingly and voluntarily in the war to "defend democracy."

Does this act, as it now reads, "defend democracy"?

I think he has put it in a rather forthright manner. This bill is discriminatory toward private enterprise. We have the Wellington Co-op Health Plan in my own riding which is serving the community very well and efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we will be voting on this amendment which is before the house, an amendment which is carefully worded so that it will secure the endorsement of all members in the house. The first part of the amendment refers to the co-operation of all provinces. I do not believe there is a member in this house who does not think we should co-operate with the provinces. Indeed, if we are going to have this great country of Canada develop the way we would like it to develop, we must have the co-operation of all provinces. This bill will not be satisfactory unless it recognizes the principle of voluntary choice by individuals.

I know our good friends down in the corner, the New Democratic Party, might find this rather difficult to get around when it comes to voting for the amendment. However I would remind them that the present plan violates a fundamental principle of a free society, namely the freedom of choice a citizen may exercise in matters relating to his own or his family's welfare. I am sure these members believe in that principle. I hope therefore that they will not fail to vote with us when the division is called on this amendment.

The amendment would make provision also for those who are unable, for financial reasons, to provide medical services now. This is something that is very important, and it is in