

Delay Second Reading On Health Services Bill

Second reading of the Drew Government's bill to enable municipalities to establish health services was held up for the second day in the Legislature yesterday mainly by C.C.F. Opposition desire to discuss it more fully. They claimed the bill did not go far enough and was largely permissive only.

Attack on the bill was led by William Dennison (C.C.F., Toronto-St. David), and the debate was adjourned by C. H. Millard (C.C.F., York West), who will continue the discussion today.

It was not the intention of the Government to impose on any region or group health services they did not desire, Premier Drew told the House. The Premier said he had received representations from the Christian Science movement asking exemption from the provisions of the health measure. The representations made by the movement were praised by the Premier as being a model of its kind.

Christian Scientists recognized the right of those who depended upon medical healing for the preservation of their health to have such services as they wished, and by the same token they, who placed faith in religious healing, asked for recognition of their position, the Premier said.

Services Not Compulsory.

"We have no intention of imposing health services on any group or individual where those services are not desired," said the Premier. "I wish to make this perfectly clear."

Earlier, in a press interview, Health Minister Dr. R. P. Vivian said that a clarifying provision would be inserted in the bill in connection with those who, because of religious conviction, ob-

jected to a compulsory form of taxation for medical treatment.

Attorney-General Leslie Blackwell explained that the bill, mainly permissive, is a framework by which municipalities can obtain what health services are desirable and pointed out that the Government did not propose to promise what it had not the money to pay for. The Province, for the duration of the war, he said, is bound under the Dominion-Provincial agreements, not to impose the very type of taxes that would be needed for an overall health plan such as some members advocated.

Bill Is Flexible.

"The bill is flexible," said Mr. Blackwell, "because some municipalities have no services and will have to be subsidized right now while others have elaborate services and will not wish to take advantage of the legislation until a system of centrally collected taxes is available".

He suggested that most of the criticism did not relate to the principle of the bill, but only to drafting and meaning of its sections and invited those who desired changes to bring them to the attention of the Government before the measure goes into committee.

William Dennison (C.C.F., St. David), approving the principle of the bill, objected to the dual function of a Province-wide board and urged that such a board should have as its members, representatives of those receiving services as well as those administering them. He saw need for local boards and felt the Provincial board should be supervisory only. The bill should state definitely, he maintained, how far health services would go.

Mr. Dennison was critical, too, of the requirement that the health

plan be submitted to the electorate after three years, holding that where it proved satisfactory there would be no need of a referendum. What was needed, he said, was a bill that would work. He contended that it did not give the people what they asked for.

"The Minister leaves himself wide open on definitions," he said. "You could drive a sleigh through the bill as far as specific outline is concerned of the plan it proposes to allow municipalities to adopt."

Welcomes Measure.

He welcomed the measure, however, as providing services to municipalities which needed them, but hoped the Government would correct the bill's defects and make it workable and in line with what the people of rural Ontario had asked.

J. B. Salsberg (L.P., Toronto-St. Andrew) termed the bill something of a disappointment and termed it an anticlimax and inadequate. W. L. Miller (L., Algoma-Manitoulin) and he intended to support the bill, but claimed it lacked punch. One of the problems of decentralization, he said, was providing medical services in rural Ontario. Since taxpayers paid a good share toward the education of doctors, he felt there should be some counter-obligation on their part to serve rural areas. "We can't all live in Toronto," he said.

"Permissive legislation is not enough," said Mr. Miller. "We've got to go further than providing the vehicle. I think you should tell them how to run it."

A. A. Casselman (C.C.F., Nipissing) declared services should be set up, not just made possible. "You should put some real authority into the bill to encourage municipalities to act," he said.

Mr. Blackwell strongly suggested a subsidy to fill the need for doctors by aiding in education as part of the plan to re-establish those in the armed forces.