

Federal Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Offer.—During 1956 and 1957 considerable progress was made toward the development of a federal-provincial system of hospital insurance and laboratory and radiological diagnostic services. For some years the Provinces of British Columbia and Saskatchewan have operated programs of hospital insurance on the basis of universal coverage and in the Provinces of Alberta and Newfoundland there have been similar programs covering smaller percentages of their population.

In January 1956 the Federal Government offered to share on a grant-in-aid basis the costs of hospital insurance and laboratory and radiological diagnostic services on certain conditions. The offer was conditional on its acceptance by a majority of provinces representing a majority of population. Universal benefits must be available within the province and the offer specified shareable and non-shareable costs. Standard ward hospital care must be provided as a basic benefit and the costs of superior accommodation must be charged to the patient who might, if he chose, insure voluntarily for this accommodation. It was anticipated that there would be substantial variation between provinces in the patterns of provincial organization and methods of financing, whether by personal premiums, sales taxes, general provincial revenues or combinations of these.

The Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act passed by the Parliament of Canada was proclaimed on May 1, 1957, authorizing the Government of Canada to enter into agreements with provincial governments. By the summer of 1957 it was apparent that at least eight provinces had indicated their intention of proceeding with hospital insurance plans along the lines of the federal proposal.

Subsection 2.—The Dominion Council of Health

The Dominion Council of Health is a statutory advisory body to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, established in 1919 and deriving its present legislative authority from Sect. 7 of the National Health and Welfare Act 1944 (R.S.C. 1952, c. 74). It is composed of the Deputy Minister of National Health who acts as Chairman, the Deputy Ministers of Health of each of the ten provinces and five appointees of the Governor in Council, selected by tradition to represent such major segments of the population as agriculture, organized labour and women's organizations.

The duties and powers of the Council as formally prescribed by the Governor in Council are:—

- (1) The consideration of matters relating to the promotion or preservation of the health of the people of Canada and the initiation of recommendations and proposals to the Minister of National Health and Welfare and other appropriate authorities in regard thereto;
- (2) The furnishing of advice to the Minister of National Health and Welfare in respect to the matters provided in Sect. 5 of the Department of National Health and Welfare Act, relating to the promotion or preservation of the health of the people of Canada, over which the Parliament of Canada has jurisdiction.

Through the Council a direct means of co-operation at the technical level is provided between provincial health departments and the Department of National Health and Welfare. In addition to being able to draw on both federal and provincial resources to aid its deliberations, it is assisted by a number of technical advisory committees composed of federal and provincial officials in different specialized fields. These committees include the Technical Advisory Committee on Public Health Laboratory Services, the Advisory Committee on Mental Health, the Federal-Provincial Nutrition Committee, the Federal-Provincial Conference on Health Education, the Federal-Provincial Conference of Communicable Disease Control Directors and the Technical Advisory Committee on Public Health Engineering.

The Council usually meets twice each year. Any member may submit items for the agenda and any agency wishing to make representation to the Council may do so. Consideration of a matter by the Council usually infers that it is of some common interest or concern to more than one province.