

*Newfoundland*

Since two hon. members have intervened I must reply to the leader of the opposition. I do not want to start reading the record again but I wish to ask him once and for all where, in all the record of dominion-provincial proceedings, from beginning to end in this green book, or in any other record, he can find any support whatever for his assertion that there would be a poll tax of \$10 or \$12.

**Mr. Drew:** This is exactly a sample of the problem that the provinces faced when they were trying to deal with some of the ministers of the government at the time the conference still met before it was stopped by the dominion government. The minister knows perfectly well that there was a co-ordinating committee, that there was an economic committee, that they prepared accurate computations and that these computations were a matter of record; and he had this record in front of him when this was under discussion. These records were prepared and they showed that at that time the figure in the case of Ontario would be \$12 for every man, woman and child in the province. The way in which it would work out was this. An estimate was made of the amount which it would be necessary for each province to raise under the plans put forward by the dominion government. Then in relation to that amount the economic experts worked out how much it would be necessary to raise in each province by this so-called registration fee, but which I described then, as on all earlier occasions that we discussed it, as a poll tax. For that was and is the correct expression.

This goes back to a letter written by the minister to Dr. Somerville, the deputy minister of the department of health in Edmonton. In his letter to Dr. Somerville the minister said:—

**Mr. Claxton:** What page?

**Mr. Drew:** I am reading from page 433 of the record of the proceedings of the conference.

The proposals of the federal government provide for compulsory registration and a registration fee but deliberately left open the question of the appropriate amount of the fee.

**Mr. Claxton:** That is right. That is what I said.

**Mr. Drew:** Certainly. They deliberately left open the appropriate amount of the fee. It was a poll tax and is a poll tax. The financial experts worked it out. In the case of Ontario that figure was \$12. That figure was before the minister and all those attending the conference.

[Mr. Claxton.]

**Mr. Claxton:** Mr. Chairman, I must be allowed just one word in reply. The leader of the opposition has referred to the economic committee. It happens that I was chairman of that committee.

**Mr. Drew:** Exactly.

**Mr. Claxton:** I can assure him, and I think that the hundreds of officials who took part in the very constructive work of that committee will bear me out, that there was no suggestion of a poll tax, there was no suggestion of a \$10 fee or a \$12 fee from beginning to end. What the leader of the opposition is talking about is the possible contribution that would be made by the provincial governments toward health insurance. How much of that would be paid out of the provincial treasury and how much would be paid by the individual was never decided because we never got far enough along to do that owing to the failure of the conference.

**Mr. Graydon:** You adjourned it.

**Mr. Claxton:** We adjourned it, yes, because it had been broken down by actions taken by the representatives of the other provinces. That is the fact. In the economic committee no figure was agreed on; no figure was worked out; but it was generally understood from the dominion proposals that 60 per cent would be paid by the federal government and 40 per cent would be met out of provincial sources. Some part of the amount to be met out of the provincial sources would be met by a registration fee—what part was never decided upon because we never got that far. To call an insurance plan, an ordinary person's contribution to meet a premium for health, a poll tax is a way of endeavouring to condemn the thing right from the start.

**Mr. Drew:** Mr. Chairman,—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Drew:** The more you do of that the better. Mr. Chairman, now that I am in this chamber I do not intend to permit the continued misrepresentation of what took place at the conference. When the suggestion is made that this was not discussed, let me read from the record of the proceedings the statement that was made at the conference, with the minister who has just taken his seat sitting at the table; and the fact that this discussion took place in accordance with my statement was not questioned because it could not be questioned. He knows it now as he knew it then. This is what the record says. Fortunately there is a record, because if there were no record these misrepresentations could go on indefinitely. You have been told that this was not discussed earlier.