

*Supply—Veterans Affairs*

some of the projects in which his branch and the provincial authorities are jointly concerned.

Hon. members will recall that some questions were raised in connection with the recovery rate of \$9.75 per day charged by this department for treatment at our hospitals. It is obvious that considerable misunderstanding exists in connection with that, and I should like to place the facts on record in order that this matter may be better understood by all concerned.

In the first place, I wish to emphasize once again that \$9.75 is an all-inclusive charge for hospitalization, including drugs, medicines, and medical attention by the leading physicians and surgeons of this country who are associated with the treatment services of this department. This rate is based upon the actual costs of operating the department's active treatment hospitals, and if anyone has any idea that this is an excessive charge, I should like to give him the actual figures for the cost of a normal appendectomy performed in an urban hospital with which I have recently communicated in order to obtain a comparison.

The hospital concerned quoted the cost as follows: Ten days' hospitalization at \$6 per day, \$60; drugs, extras, etc., \$28; services of an anaesthetist, \$15; surgeon's fee, \$100; The total cost is \$203. As opposed to this, the cost in a D.V.A. hospital would be ten days at \$9.75 per day or a total of \$97.50.

It was stated in this house during the previous discussion on my estimates that veterans had decided to obtain treatment at a civilian hospital rather than pay \$9.75 per day in a D.V.A. institution. This is quite incorrect, as any veteran with entitlement receives treatment from this department entirely free. If the veteran has no entitlement then the department has no authority to treat that veteran in the hospital. The exception to the latter is that a veteran can be treated in a D.V.A. hospital in case of an emergency, such as an acute illness or accident which occurs near the D.V.A. hospital. In such cases, the veteran is theoretically supposed to pay \$9.75 per day, but departmental regulations provide that the cost of treatment of these classes of patients shall be recouped by the department "wherever possible".

This department does give treatment to a considerable number of individuals at the request of provincial workmen's compensation boards, the Canadian Paraplegic Association, foreign governments and other federal government departments, upon repayment of the current recovery rate of \$9.75 by those organizations, not the individual veteran. In

addition, our treatment facilities are available to the Department of National Defence and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for treatment of their forces at the recovery rate of payment.

A question has been asked by the hon. member for Calgary East (Mr. Harkness) as to the revenue received for the treatment of patients. In answer, I will give the amounts received for the first six months of the current fiscal year, ending September 30, 1949. The total collected was \$386,015.62, of which \$367,347.21 was collected from organizations such as provincial workmen's compensation boards, the Canadian Paraplegic Association, and so forth, but does not include the amount yet to be recovered from the Department of National Defence and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The difference between these two figures, namely \$18,668.41, represents the total amount collected by the department for the first six months of this year for hospitalization of individual veterans. However, I am given to understand that most of this money is paid by insurance companies and the various prepaid medical schemes, inasmuch as a large number of the veterans concerned appear to be covered by protective medical insurance policies. I am quite sure, therefore, that all hon. members will realize that in actual practice hospitalization of veterans, other than those who have entitlement or who are sponsored by some organization, is not extensive and that very little cash is collected from the veterans themselves.

The hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) made some comments the other day with regard to the Veterans Business and Professional Loans Act, but on the whole my department has found that the branch managers of the chartered banks now possess a good general knowledge of the act, the regulations and the procedure. When in difficulty they undoubtedly refer the issue to their head office, and in all cases the services of the Department of Finance are available for advice and information. It must be borne in mind that the bank is obligated under the act to treat every application for a loan with the same care as is exercised in the conduct of ordinary bank business. Consequently, an opinion as to whether the venture is sound must vary as between individual bank officials in different localities.

I should like to add also that the responsible minister for the Veterans Business and Professional Loans Act is the Minister of Finance, but I would advise the hon. member for Kootenay West that I will refer the matter to that minister in order to see if it is considered desirable to communicate with the