

country, just now at all events, certainly can get medical relief when it is needed. I am not very familiar with the regulations in connection with war pensioners, but I have read this letter to the minister and I would like to hear what he has to say in regard to the matter.

Mr. SUTHERLAND: That brings up the matter we were discussing before recess. The dominion government has never recognized that it was responsible for medical relief. During the last few years, since the question has been brought up, we have gone on the assumption that it was the duty of the municipalities to look after medical relief, with the exception of the pensioners themselves. We have taken the ground that because a man went overseas, his wife and family have not lost their rights of citizenship or their right to secure certain care such as medical relief from the municipalities in which they reside. We maintain that the municipalities taking that stand—there are not many—are hardly playing fair with those people.

Mr. HOWDEN: Possibly it would not be a practicable procedure, but I suggest to the minister that some action might be taken by his department in regard to these people and the municipalities in which they live. It seems too bad that municipalities should shrug their shoulders and refuse to have anything to do with them. There must be some responsibility somewhere, and if it does not rest with the Department of Pensions and National Health someone ought to point out to these municipalities that these people are very seriously in need. It might not be the business of the minister's department to take up the matter, but it seems to me that in a large way it is the business of the federal authority at all events to see that these people get the succour they deserve. I am just leaving it with the minister in that way, in the hope that something may be done.

Mr. MacINNIS: I was just going to bring up the point that has been raised by the hon. member for St. Boniface. Mine is not a particular case, but rather a general complaint from the pensioners on relief in the constituency which I represent. They make the same complaint, that while city relief recipients receive medical attention and medicine to some extent at least through the civic authorities, the pensioners on relief are not allowed the same advantages. There is also a complaint in regard to the fact that relief is not paid in cash. I would like to ask the minister how the relief is paid.

[Mr. Veniot.]

Mr. SUTHERLAND: We never pay in cash; we pay in orders for goods such as groceries and fuel, and for rent.

Mr. MacINNIS: Is there any good reason why payment should not be made in cash? I believe the municipalities are adopting that method now. When relief was started I think the practice was to handle it by means of relief vouchers, but now I think most of the municipalities are paying in cash; at least the tendency is very much in that direction. Has the minister considered that matter, and is there any possibility of payments being made in cash?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: Of course there is this difference, that the pensioners are receiving their pensions in cash; that is not affected at all. It is simply the supplementary relief that is issuable by these orders.

Mr. MacINNIS: I am aware of that, but I have before me a typical case of a five per cent pensioner who also receives an allowance. The pension amounts to about \$7.75, and that is paid in cash. The relief allowance—this is for a family of five—amounts to something like \$34.65, which would be paid in vouchers for certain kinds of goods. Are the particular commodities and quantities stated in the vouchers?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: I am informed that they do not specify a pound of rice or a pound of meat or anything like that; they are for so much food.

Mr. MacINNIS: Is there any allowance in the vouchers for medical attention or medicine?

Mr. SUTHERLAND: Medical treatment is only for the pensioner himself.

Mr. MacINNIS: Of course that makes it rather difficult, because where there are families usually it is the families that need the medical attention. I think the allowance is altogether too small. In the case I have before me the pensioner on relief receives a pension of \$7.75 and a relief allowance of \$34.65, or a total of \$42.40. Out of that comes fuel, an average of \$5 a month, which I think is a very low average even for the lower mainland of British Columbia. There is an allowance of \$1 a month for electric light, which I think also is very low. Then there is 60 cents for an evening paper, \$1.25 for car fare and \$12 for rent. It will be noticed that the rent accounts for a large portion of the allowance. That amounts in all to about \$19.85, leaving a balance of \$22.55 for food for the family for a month. That works out