

Mr. RALSTON: Of course, as my hon. friend understands, it depends upon the location of these staff houses. I will make inquiries. We do not want to build any hospitals if we can adapt to the purpose places which are already available. I take it that these houses are in industrial districts.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): Yes, they all are in industrial towns. They are located right across Canada, at Sorel, St. Catharines, Peterborough, Hamilton, Fort William, Pictou, New Glasgow, Halifax, Amherst, Saint John, Prince Rupert, Vancouver, and Esquimalt.

Mr. McCANN: What amount of money does the department propose to spend this year with reference to additions to civilian hospitals throughout Canada to be used during the war period for the treatment of men in the service? I understand that as a matter of policy the government have adopted the plan of making grants to civilian hospitals. A case in point is the city of Ottawa, where an addition is being made to the Civic hospital. Is that general policy throughout the country and, if so, what amount does the government propose to spend within the next year for this purpose?

Mr. RALSTON: As I was explaining this afternoon, it cannot be said that there is a general policy of spending money for additions to civilian hospitals. Each case has to depend upon its merits and the circumstances. That is to say, in a city it may be quite possible to do that, and in camps, of course, it is impossible. There is not any specific amount which is set aside for that purpose, but each case will come before the interdepartmental committee, and if authority is given, of course the money will be available. There is sufficient money in this vote to take care of that situation.

Mr. McCANN: Has the government given any further consideration to the matter of amalgamating the medical services of the three departments? Two years ago, when the war appropriation estimates were up, I made some observations along this line. It is generally known that there is a very considerable shortage of medical personnel throughout the country, and the services of the medical profession have been given freely and generously from one end of Canada to the other. I have felt since the beginning of the war that it was a triplication of services to have a medical corps in the army, one for the air force, and a separate one for the navy. I have suggested before that we could have a distinctive Canadian medical corps; call it the Royal Canadian

Medical Corps and give the members a distinctive uniform, and they could render service in any particular branch. After all, when men or women in the services are ill and go into hospital, there are very few problems peculiar to one branch of the service. I understand that in connection with the air force problems arise having to do with flying and with altitude, but they are not such as could not be easily handled by a medical board as one unit.

My reason for making the proposal is, partly on account of the enormous expense which is entailed to the country in having three services, but more particularly because there is throughout Canada a very serious shortage of medical men to take care of the civilian population. I know this matter is being studied and acted upon by the assignments and procurements board; steps are taken to keep available medical men, especially in rural and smaller communities, in order that these essential services to the civilian and the industrial populations may not be lessened and that there will be a reasonable amount of care in these particular localities. I believe, and I think it is the opinion of medical men throughout the country, that it is a waste of money, man-power and efficiency to have a triplication of services. I do not know personally, but I have been told that last year, on the Pacific coast, for 6,000 men in the naval service there were fifty-four doctors. That would work out at one doctor to 150 men, which of course is out of all proportion to the number who attend to the civilian population ordinarily. I submit to the minister that it is an unfair distribution of an essential service.

While I am on this point I wish to commend the minister for the tribute which he paid the other day to the medical men of this country. The derogatory and insulting remarks made by the hon. member for Temiscouata with reference to the medical men, that they represented the dregs of the profession, are absolutely untrue. It is false and is a gratuitous insult, and I hurl it back into the teeth of the man who made it. After all, the medical men in the armed services are but a cross-section of those who are in the profession in Canada. Let me say that the medical profession in this dominion stands as high as that profession does in any country in the world. That is generally conceded, and to have a member of this house hurl an insult at a dignified and worthy profession, a profession that gave freely of its services in the last war and is giving those services with equal liberality in this war, is not worthy of the man who made that statement.

I wish the minister would take into consideration what I am about to submit to him