

Supply—Health and Welfare

than they did. Second, it is the responsibility of the Minister of Justice under the Financial Administration Act to make a determination whether the overpayment is recoverable and the cabinet subsequently adopts an order in council, Treasury Board minute, or whatever the mechanism is, providing that the individual's old age pension will be cut in half even though the overpayment resulted in part from the error of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I do not know what probability there is that the overpayment will be completely cleared up. Who knows how long a person will live? I do not know this gentleman's age at the moment but presumably he is at least a year or two over age 70. Whether the individual himself will continue to receive the old age pension for a sufficient length of time to pay off the indebtedness is problematical, all other things being equal.

I would seriously urge upon the minister that he institute a review of this matter and take into account the probability that the Department of Veterans Affairs made an error in not making this determination sooner than they did and also take into account the good possibility that even if you persist in deducting \$38 a month from his \$75 you will not recover the full overpayment in any event because of the passing of time. If Treasury Board must insist on balancing its books in so far as this one individual is concerned, I would ask that they be kind and gracious enough to wipe some of the overpayment off the books. If they feel they must make a deduction from his cheques in order to cover some of the overpayment, then let them think in terms of a deduction of \$5 or \$10. This is the usual amount, the hon. member for Kootenay West tells me, and he has had many years of experience in dealing with the Department of Veterans Affairs. He tells me that usually \$5 is considered to be the proper token deduction to make in order to reduce overpayments.

I seriously urge this upon the minister. I have refrained from giving the individual's name but the minister is certainly welcome to the correspondence. I will send the correspondence to him later so that he will have it in his possession. I hope he will do something worth while for this individual and see if he can approach the problem with some fairness.

Mr. Coates: Mr. Chairman, first of all I should like to say I was both shocked and angered by the reply of the Prime Minister

[Mr. Howard.]

today to the effect that we in the Atlantic provinces should be grateful for what this government has done. I hope that my remarks this afternoon will not be considered in this light by the representative in the cabinet from Nova Scotia. This is an example of the Liberal philosophy about which I complained earlier in regard to presenting estimates in the house and it is a philosophy which must disappear if we are to hope to achieve the mutual and merited consideration of proposals when they come before the federal government.

I should like to recommend to the minister the speech of the hon. member for Simcoe East last evening. He in effect told the minister it is not realistic to try to provide the Canadian people with second rate medicare when they are deserving of the very best. He went on to say that they can receive it only if certain actions are taken by the government to provide the facilities which the doctors must have to work with if they are to be given an opportunity to provide the kind of service that Canadians want.

I recall a difficult situation that developed very recently in the Maritime provinces because we do not have the facilities to provide the kind of medical education desired by those who would like to have it. We do not have adequate facilities at Dalhousie University and there are none in New Brunswick, none in Prince Edward Island and none in Newfoundland. As a result Dalhousie medical school was under very severe criticism because of the number of applications they were willing to consider from areas other than Nova Scotia.

I know there has been a long discussion by the medical association of New Brunswick about the possibility of the establishment of a second medical school. Certainly something must be done in our area if we are to produce the number of doctors we need to service our people. Surely it would be very unfair to inflict upon doctors in our area an even greater load than they already are carrying simply because of the desire to meet a deadline.

No one in the Conservative party wishes to do anything but see to it that people in every part of Canada receive the very best medical attention. No one in the Conservative party wishes any person in Canada to be deprived of medical attention when he or she needs it. But we also appreciate the fact that certain actions which have not been taken must be taken on a priority basis before we can