

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

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

**Mr. Bryce:** Hon. members may laugh but it is an awfully serious business to have this happen to someone in one's family. If this government has been good enough to enact a pension for these people I want to see the thing evenly divided so the people who are entitled to it will get it.

I can understand that somebody who has some sense, who can do a little work, can go to the village for groceries and that sort of thing, would be of some use. But here is a man who has been of no earthly use since the day he was born. Somebody has to look after him. His mother and father are gone. The brother is looking after him. This is a man who should come under the act.

I do not want to get in wrong with hon. members by taking too long, but I appeal to the minister. When we come back in January, bring this legislation before parliament. This legislation has never been debated in the house. Up to the present time the regulations have all been made by the department. Let us have this legislation before us and give it a good keel-hauling.

**Mr. Martin:** The regulations are made by the provinces and the federal government together.

**Mr. Bryce:** The provinces are no more free from guilt than the minister. If you both have had to do with the making of the law, well, the two of you can improve on it. I think the panel in Manitoba is much too strict. I think they are like the lawyers in this house. They will hold out for a comma or a semi-colon.

**An hon. Member:** Steady.

**Mr. Bryce:** Now we are getting the doctors in the same class. If they say something they stick together by hook or by crook. You have to use a lot of common sense when you are administering legislation of this kind. I hope the minister will do something for the people of the dominion as far as that is concerned. It is the people who have to raise them, look after them and clothe them who need the consideration.

**Mr. Martin:** I thank my hon. friend for his suggestion.

**Mr. Barnett:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a few words about the position of blind persons in Canada. I know it will probably be small consolation to the minister if I remind him that it was not too long ago that we had Bill No. 350 before the house, which was an act to amend the Blind Persons Act. That bill went through the

[Mr. Bryce.]

house with a minimum of discussion. I am quite sure from what information has come to me that the passage of that bill undoubtedly was welcomed by the people of Canada who are unfortunate enough to be sightless.

The particular matter which I want to raise revolves around a principle which has been termed a guiding allowance without a means test to people who are blind. I do not profess to be any great authority on the problems of blind persons, but as far as I have been able to understand that suggestion it makes a lot of sense to me. As far as I can see it is based upon the premise that regardless of what other circumstances may be involved, economic, educational or otherwise, the person unfortunate enough to be without sight has to make an uphill fight.

It has been suggested to me that one of the most difficult problems facing a person who is blind or who becomes blind, in the matter of rehabilitating himself and making an attempt to become self-supporting, is the fact that under the present legislation we have in Canada he feels that in branching out and making that effort, and not being sure he is going to be able to maintain it, he may thereby lose his allowance.

I was interested in having drawn to my attention the fact that there are some countries in the world which have accepted the principle about which I am speaking, Sweden and Denmark being two of them. An article which I have before me written by someone familiar with the conditions there points out, among other things, that in those two countries a sharp line is drawn between economic support to secure the maintenance of needy people and economic compensation granted to lessen the special expenses imposed by blindness.

That simply points up the matter I have mentioned, that people who are blind have a starting point in life behind those of us who are blessed with normal sight; and it also verifies that in those countries they subscribe to the suggestion that this is one means of giving to blind people the necessary assurance and encouragement to make an effort to become self-supporting. I am raising this point now without attempting to elaborate on it at any great length, because I feel that it should be receiving consideration when we come to make the next forward legislative step in connection with the blind people of Canada.

**Mr. Nowlan:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to concur in what the hon. member for Selkirk said a moment ago with respect to the regulations concerning the granting of disability pensions. I realize that this is a new