

Supply—Health and Welfare

Mr. Gillis: There is nothing wrong with the act, it is just stupid administration.

Mr. Harrison: That, of course, completely ignores the mentality of people of the Indian race. The moment they get a dollar in their hands they want to spend it. Even if they could read a letter, or if someone interpreted it for them, the fact that they received a letter saying that this money does not belong to them but they must take it to the school, that it belongs to the school, would mean nothing to them. They live for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.

The Chairman: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I am obliged to advise him his time has expired.

An hon. Member: Go ahead.

The Chairman: Has the hon. member unanimous consent to proceed?

Mr. Harrison: I shall finish very quickly.

Some hon. Members: Go ahead.

Mr. Harrison: That kind of thinking amazes me. It may be because the civil servants in charge are not familiar with that area. One of the things that was told to me about the qualifications of the present regional director in Regina was that he had better qualifications than any other regional director in Canada. On the basis of the yardstick they use, I think that is right. He is the only graduate in social services.

Mr. Gillis: That is what is wrong with him.

Mr. Harrison: I think my hon. friend is correct. I agree with that. I should like to set the examination for a regional director for Saskatchewan, particularly one who has to administer that northern area if he does not know anything about it. This particular gentleman was sent in, I understand, from Halifax. He is a graduate in social services. If I were setting an examination for that position, I would take him on a trip up to my riding—I have very rugged country in the northern part of Saskatchewan—and I would drop him by parachute in the wildest part of that country with a rifle and 20 rounds of ammunition. If I came back one year later and he was still alive he would be a good man to put in as a regional director, because he would certainly know that country and its problems. He would not be writing to the people, even if he thought they could read, and telling them to go 150 miles on snowshoes to pick up their cheque, sign it and take it to Father Gagnon or Father Bourbonnais, whoever happened to be there, and in that way fulfil the letter of this act before they could get their family allowances.

As will be seen from the concern shown by Father Bourbonnais in this little pamphlet, the net result is that 110 children who have been kept all this year by the mission without any family allowances are not going to come back, because of the example of the 20 pupils who stayed home to get their allowances. I think I have said enough, and I have taken advantage of the indulgence of the members of the committee, for which I thank them, and also of the minister. I have no doubt he will make some rebuttal to this. I hope that by the time he gets through something will be done, and that he will not merely say that we have nothing to do with education in the province. We have a responsibility to pay family allowances, in my opinion, to every child in Canada, no holds barred, and particularly to those people about whom I am speaking.

Mrs. Fairclough: I am not sure if I am correct in my opinion that this is the first time a minister has had such expert advice on the floor of the house. I should like to compliment him—and it is not often I compliment a minister—on the very high calibre of the advice he has. I am sure that under the circumstances the opposition can make very little headway.

Mr. Gillis: I should like to say a few words on this item, administration of welfare. I am not going to elaborate on old age security. This group likes to expedite the work of the house, so it organizes itself in order to do that. We have one chief spokesman on each department's estimates, and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has aired the views of all members of this group on the question of old age security. I should like to say that we agree with him, and there is no need to repeat what he said.

I should like to supplement what the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra had to say on the qualification clause in the Old Age Security Act. It is even worse than he painted it. I run into cases in trying to establish old age security—or old age pension, as it was known before the act was changed—of men who spent five years out of the country in the armed services fighting a war, and find that time was disallowed for pension purposes. The present minister will find records in his files where I have taken up at least one case during the past five years in regard to that particular question, and as far as I am concerned I never got it straightened out. I just want to make sure that men who served during the last war and in Korea for several years—