

*Vocational Rehabilitation*

from time to time the present Minister of Finance in particular used to argue that these health grants should be presented to parliament in the form of a statute and not in the form of an annual vote, thereby making the particular measure an uncontrollable expenditure within the meaning of that word as it is understood in the Department of Finance.

There is a strong argument for that contention and this may be the right thing to do in this particular case. I am not now arguing that point; I am pointing out what we are really being asked to do. I suggest that the minister ought to explain, when he closes the debate, more succinctly and in greater detail why it has been decided to put this measure in statute form and not leave it in the form of an annual estimate.

I know that some provinces—I know this is the viewpoint of some federal officials not only in the Department of National Health and Welfare but also in the Department of Labour—felt there would be greater opportunity for flexible action, for greater improvement in the amounts involved and in the character of the program itself, if it were not restricted by a statute and were open to annual discussion during the study of the department's estimates by parliament.

In fairness to the minister, he dealt with this problem at page 2989 of *Hansard*, where he is reported as having said:

By placing authority for this program in statute form, we shall give the provinces the assurance of continued support for their work in this connection. The legislation proposed has been developed with the co-operation of the Department of National Health and Welfare.

So the minister has, at least in principle, answered me by saying that by putting this particular program in the form of a statute we are giving the provinces the assurance of continued support. The minister will undoubtedly add to that statement.

However, I feel that the provinces have the assurance of this support. Surely, no responsible government in any province would for one moment think that parliament would renege upon the implied commitment it made when this program was first enunciated and established in this house. Surely no one in this house would suggest this.

No one has so far expressed any view that would warrant the suggestion that there is any danger that any government in Canada would refuse to continue to co-operate with the provinces in providing for vocational rehabilitation grants and all the incidentals which go with this program. Therefore, I am not convinced that putting this resolution in statute form will have the advantage to which the Minister of Labour has referred, namely

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of giving the provinces the assurance of continued support for their work in this connection. Indeed the Minister of National Health and Welfare in this government is my authority for saying that, as a result of his experience, leaving these matters in estimate form is a more effective way of providing for flexibility of program and for the kind of co-ordination that is necessary.

In fairness to the position of the government in this regard I must say, as I mentioned a moment ago, that in connection with the national health grants the present government, when in opposition, took the position that those grants should be put in the form of a statute and not presented to parliament by way of annual estimate.

Therefore when the present government came into office, armed with my knowledge that this was the view of the present administration when in opposition, I asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare whether it was now the intention of the government to put the national health and welfare grants in statute form, or was he going to leave them, as had been the practice since 1949, in the form whereby they would come to parliament as an annual estimate. The minister said that, as a result of the experience he had acquired, he had come to the conclusion that this was the best way to deal with the matter.

The Minister of Labour expresses another view. I am simply now expressing the view that the experience of the Department of National Health and Welfare in this matter is not without some value. I look with interest to the additional reasons the minister will give for the form in which the proposal is to be presented to parliament hereafter, in light of the practice which has been in existence for many years.

My main concern is that in presenting this argument today the government will have this in mind and as a result of my speech will be encouraged to use the form of a statute as a means of enabling some of their protagonists and spokesmen to say, "See what we have done. We have brought forward an act of parliament providing for vocational rehabilitation".

They will also be, not duty bound in law but I think morally bound to say, "Of course, we have not done anything different from what the Liberals did. They really brought this measure in. All we did was to bring it forward in a different form".

I do not like to inject a political note into my first major speech since returning to the house, but I know enough about politics to know that the Prime Minister, who was so gracious to me today, will certainly in the next election hold up a number of acts as a