

Supply—Health and Welfare

I admit, Mr. Chairman, I am going to repeat the quotation. On page 663 of the report of the Senate committee we find the following:

The evidence of medical authorities was to the effect that drug addiction is not a disease in itself.

If I had time I would read more, but I shall not. Let us go down to the last paragraph on the same page and see what we find there:

The treatment of illness is a matter which comes within the responsibility of provincial authorities as, for example, mental illness and tuberculosis. Drug addiction—

Get this. This is only a dozen lines after my previous quotation. I am quoting again from the same page:

Drug addiction is considered by medical and social authorities to be a form of illness, and the treatment of it as such is likewise within the jurisdictional responsibility of the provinces and of the communities therein.

Just look at it, Mr. Chairman. In the middle of page 663 of the Senate report on narcotic drugs they say:

The evidence of medical authorities was to the effect that drug addiction is not a disease in itself.

At the bottom of the page they say:

Drug addiction is considered by medical and social authorities to be a form of illness.

There it is. And that is supposed to be something that you, sir, should take as a responsible report. My friend the doctor on my right says there is a difference between an illness and a disease.

Mr. Trainor: The Senate think so.

Mr. Winch: I thank you, sir. He says the Senate think so but doctors do not. Illness and disease are the same. I understand it. I am not going to take the time of this committee nor the time of the Minister of National Health and Welfare to say what a contradictory, useless report this is.

Mr. Hosking: You have made a good point.

Mr. Winch: I have tried to make a point. I have tried to show how contradictory the report is. I have tried to show how they contradict themselves in their definition of illness according to their own evidence, as when I spoke on the estimates of the Department of Justice I tried to show how they contradicted themselves on law enforcement. From now on I am going to forget the report, as everybody should. I am convinced the Minister of National Health and Welfare is going to forget it too.

The point is, what are we going to do about this problem? It is admitted, and I admit, that there is a big problem in western Canada. It is not going to be solved by passing the

[Mr. Winch.]

buck between provincial governments and the federal government. It is not going to be solved by passing the buck and the responsibility to the R.C.M.P. and the municipal authorities. It is a problem that must be tackled, irrespective of responsibility, by co-operation between all authorities. I admit that I do not know the answer. I admit that very readily. But I do say we have reached a time, because of the seriousness of the situation, when we should have some definite statement of fact. If the tackling of the problem is being held up federally, then we should know. If it is being held up provincially, then we should know. If there is an endeavour to get together, as I understand there is and I hope there is, provincially and federally, then I believe the people of Canada and this house are entitled to know exactly what is going on.

I personally, from years of study, believe in a certain approach. That is the English system. This approach on half a page of this Senate report wipes out the English system. If the English system is wrong I will accept that. If it is wrong, I should like to know why, sir. That is why I am not making any statement beyond the fact that this is a contradictory report, and to ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare whether he can and will give us his opinion now as to how the drug addiction problem should be tackled in Canada. He has known of the problem for years. He has worked at it for years. He knows that in British Columbia we are up against a terrific problem.

I am not convinced that the R.C.M.P. and the Vancouver narcotic squad are not doing a good job in trying to tackle it. I believe they are; but at the same time it is not only the responsibility of the R.C.M.P., under the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act, to stop the importation of drugs, with the ancillary help of squads such as those we have in the city of Vancouver and in other cities. The major problem is this. We have drug addicts in Canada. From the best information I can obtain throughout the world it would appear that there are many who can never be cured. There are authorities throughout the world who say it is better to treat the confirmed addict at cost rather than have him break the law and steal in order to satisfy his craving.

This is one of the greatest problems we have, and it is costing us directly and indirectly millions of dollars. After the years the minister of health and welfare has been in charge of this department it is time he had an answer. If he has not, can he give us some indication as to the answer and what