

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

should have an accurate picture of the condition of the patient. I have had some of these people come to me and I have examined their papers. I found they were answered simply "yes" or "no", and questions such as "Is he totally disabled?" were answered with a bare "yes" and no reason was mentioned. In many cases the blame rests with members of my own profession. Simply because a doctor says an individual is disabled is no reason why the board should accept that bald statement.

This gives rise to a great deal of trouble. The forms are filled out with "yes" and "no" all the way down, and usually at the bottom of the form the words "totally disabled" are written in and then someone signs it. The board has to judge an applicant on the basis of the form, which I have already referred to as a penned picture produced by the applicant for the benefit of the board in order that they may pass judgment upon it.

I now come to the other point. The legislation is not very well understood with regard to the two terms "totally and permanently disabled". I am concerned about cases which perhaps could be called borderline. If you called this a helplessness allowance you could speak of these people as being those who are not able to dress themselves, go to the bathroom and up and down stairs and generally take care of themselves. They are absolutely helpless. There is the other type of case where people are totally and permanently disabled, yet they are able to do all those things.

Possibly I could tell the committee about one case I investigated out in the country, where a young man with a wife and one child had suffered a very serious heart condition. He is unable to do any gardening in the little garden they have because he can not hold a garden instrument for any length of time. He is unable to do any work at all. That man is totally and permanently disabled. Despite the fact that he made two applications he did not qualify for helplessness allowance because he was able to dress himself and go to his meals and that sort of thing. Nevertheless that man by any standard is totally and permanently disabled.

I appreciate that it is difficult to try to establish some form of examination or standard whereby these cases can be judged in order to arrive at a proper formula for a person who is totally and permanently disabled, but I have two suggestions to make. I would suggest that greater care should be taken in making out the application papers in order not to make it difficult for the board administering the act, and there should be

[Mr. Blair.]

a little more leeway given in the interpretation of the act. I do not think you should rewrite the qualifications. I thought this over for quite a long time, and I think the only way to remedy the situation is to give more leeway to take in that type of borderline case who cannot qualify for the helplessness allowance but who is totally and permanently disabled.

I would not abuse the act, because I think it is an excellent provision which has done a great deal of good, but that situation seems to be destroying its usefulness. I have no suggestion to make as to what should be written in as to the degree of helplessness necessary in a person. I think the only thing that can be done is to give a little more leeway to the board which considers applications. Where you have a set of papers of the "Yes" and "No" variety—sometimes I blame the doctors, because they are not good writers anyway—there should be a bit more leeway given. We should do the same as we do with the veterans and give the benefit of the doubt. Let the board go back for further information on the case. Possibly the person looking after old age pensions in the county could make a confidential report. You could get a confidential report from the reeve or mayor of the municipality, or you could get a letter from the clergyman or some well known person. The board could get further information in that way.

I know that at the present time there is a lot of trouble in connection with people who are totally disabled but who do not seem to come within the act as it is written at the present time. I suggest that there be further investigation in such cases, and that the board be given power to investigate and also be given a little more leeway to bring in those cases which are really totally and permanently disabled but who do not qualify by reason of being helpless.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Chairman, I shall attempt to deal with all the questions that have been asked. I want to thank my hon. friend very much for the helpful contribution he has just made. He has put his finger directly and precisely on the difficulty we have had. I suppose he was able to do that because as a physician he knows the difficulty of arriving at a definition in the particular situation that confronts us. Other countries having this type of legislation have had the same difficulties.

My hon. friend will recall that during the winter we had a meeting of the medical examining boards which was most fruitful. As a result there has been some relaxation in the constant and continuous feature, and as a result since that time there has been an