

Supply—Health and Welfare

month is not a figure fixed for all time for old age security.

Even though it would have to devote some time to it, I urge the department to do some re-assessing of the pensions and benefits paid under these various pieces of legislation. It is going to be fine, a quarter of a century from now, when people who retire under the Canada pension plan will have a reasonable amount on which to retire. It is going to be fine, when people who become disabled and people who have dependants will have something reasonable to live on; but what about people in 1964 and 1965, and during the rest of this decade and the early part of the next one? If we are going to be consistent in our desire to improve the social security position, that desire must not only be for the future but also for the present. Therefore I rise to express the hope that some of the time of the department will be spent on reassessing these various statutes, the Old Age Security Act, the Disabled Persons Act, the Blind Persons Act and others that this department administers. It does seem to me the amounts paid under these acts need to be increased and that other changes need to be made.

My hon. friend from Kootenay West referred earlier today to the eligibility conditions in the Disabled Persons Act. All of us hear a great many sad stories in this connection. If I might mention one other matter, there is the requirement with respect to old age security benefits that one last year be spent in Canada before people can receive payments. In the case of people who have lived all their lives in Canada but who, at 65 or 68, have to go to the United Kingdom, or the United States, for reasons of health or for economic or family reasons, it is hard to explain to them that despite all the time they have spent in this country they cannot draw old age security payments unless they return and manage to spend one more year in Canada. This is a detail, as I have said, but it is an awkward detail in the experience of a good many people.

The over-all submission I am making is one which I hope the minister will take seriously. Yes, she is doing a good job in her fight to get the Canada pension plan. I suspect she has to fight a lot harder for it than some of us may realize. Yes, she is doing well to have 14 committees studying the Hall report, and I hope we will get moving soon toward a health charter for Canadians. But in doing all these things I ask that she and her department not forget the improve-

ments needed by those people who have to depend on the pensions, benefits and allowances they get under these various other acts. I urge that these things be attended to as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Langlois: Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to make a long speech; I will only make a few comments concerning item 40 of the estimates of the Department of National Health and Welfare.

I think the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) dealt to some extent with the matter I intended to cover, but I hope I will nevertheless be allowed to make a few suggestions, not only for the good of the Canadian people but also to help the government in its administration of the old age pension and family allowances programs.

It is a well known fact that at present the pensions or the amounts paid by the federal government to assist certain destitute people or certain persons in the provinces, are completely administered by the provinces. By the way, the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson) referred to those agreements a while ago.

Now, I must congratulate the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss LaMarsh) for her efficiency and for the courtesy with which she gives us answers and deals with the cases submitted to her. I wish to express special thanks.

It is true that a minister may not always control everything and look after every detail as he would like to, and it is precisely on that point that I wish to make certain observations concerning some administrative officers, who may come under provincial jurisdiction, in respect of amounts paid out by the federal government. In some cases, there is discrimination. It is true that the federal government makes those payments heartily and that the provincial governments try to administer them in the same manner, at least I am quite prepared to believe it. But every general rule has its exceptions.

In this field, unfortunately, exceptions are not rare. I think it may be caused by over-zealous persons, and since we are all human, there may be also, in certain cases, personal feelings involved; that is why we, as members of the House of Commons, very often receive complaints in regard to the procedures followed by the officials in the distribution of pensions.

I am thinking here, for instance, of certain cases where the federal minister or depart-