

*War Appropriation—Labour*

Mr. BLACKMORE: What would be the cost to the mother for children of various ages? I gather that children are admitted to these nurseries between the ages of two and six. What would be the cost to a mother engaged in war work if she had two children, aged two and four, whom she wished to put in a nursery?

Mr. MITCHELL: It would be 35 cents for the first child and 15 or 20 cents for the second child.

Mr. BLACKMORE: That is for the whole day?

Mr. MITCHELL: Yes, for the whole day, with all meals. For school children it is 25 cents for the first child and 10 cents for the second. That is where they get their meals, and milk after school, and supervision.

Mr. BLACKMORE: For how many hours would they be kept in the nursery for those amounts?

Mr. MITCHELL: That is a rather difficult question to answer, for it would vary in each individual case. It would depend upon local conditions, how long the mother took to go back and forth to work and so on. They would be there for ten or twelve hours I should think.

Mr. McIVOR: I believe this vote is necessary now, but I do not think we should consider continuing these nurseries indefinitely. The care of children in this way is not new; I can remember thirty-five years ago when these clinics were established in Toronto. I would warn the Minister of Labour, however, that no one can take care of a child like that child's mother, and I hope the day may come when mothers may be provided with sufficient of this world's goods that they may be able to remain at home and take care of their children. Those who understand something of the causes of divorce realize that children are an extremely fine tie in the home, and when we delegate the care of children to a nurse, no matter how fine and Christian a woman she may be, she cannot take the place of the mother. When children have to be cared for outside the home, whatever the reason, to me it is a sign of the breakdown of the home. After all, the home is the bulwark of the nation, and I hope the Minister of Labour will keep this in mind so that, when the war is over, mothers may not be required to work in order to earn a living. It is a case of necessity, of course, in connection with war work, and I know some mothers are quite willing to go out and work so that

[Mr. Mitchell.]

they may not have to live in straitened circumstances. I just give this warning, and I am sure the Minister of Pensions and National Health also will keep this in mind.

Mr. MacINNIS: I should like to say a word in reply to the remarks of the hon. member for Fort William. First, I think this amount is rather small in view of the need that must exist, and I believe it should be increased. I have been associated with public affairs in one way or another for a good many years. For some twenty to twenty-five years in the city of Vancouver we have had day nurseries, though we called them creches, to look after the children of women who had to go out and work. The provision made was very inadequate, but they did fulfil a great need; and I am quite satisfied that when this war is over, unless we improve conditions much quicker than I expect them to be improved, we shall have to continue these day nurseries. Whether or not the home is the best place for the child and the mother is the best person to look after the child depends altogether upon the home and the mother. I have seen mothers who were not fit to look after their children; and until all mothers are educated to look properly after their children and then are provided with sufficient means to do so, other ways will have to be found in order that the children may be saved and that the community may be spared the expense that inevitably it will be put to unless we provide for the proper bringing up of the children while there is yet time.

Mr. REID: I should like to say a word in support of the remarks of the hon. member for Fort William. I listened to the speech of the hon. member for North Battleford, and I rather thought she was advancing an idea which was new to this country but which has been tried in other countries, namely, the idea of collectivism in the bringing up of our children. I hope the minister was not too much impressed with that idea because, after all, as the hon. member for Fort William has pointed out, the home is the bulwark of the nation. There may be homes in which children would be better cared for, but by and large our people have always depended upon the home. I want to point this out to the committee. The department may look after young children, as pointed out by the hon. member for North Battleford. This more than takes care of the very young children. But I am told that in many cities the juvenile delinquency, pertaining to children of mothers who have gone out to work, is alarming. I should hope that aspect has not been lost sight of in any scheme of this kind. I am one who hopes that this vote may not be necessary after the war, and