

Supply—Health and Welfare

Mr. Benson: As I understand it, this is merely a matter of changing the wording so that a grant can be made. There was approval by Treasury Board of a grant of \$20,000 to Queen's University in aid of mining research. I am happy about that. This grant is to support the research side of Queen's participation in the tri-university project in mining engineering, a graduate program of teaching and research developed jointly by Queen's and Laval universities and the University of British Columbia to arrest the serious fall-off in availability to Canada of mining engineers and scientists.

The department had intended that the \$20,000 grant to Queen's be charged to an item to be included in supplementary estimates E, 1965-66. It has now been found possible for the grant to be made from funds already available and for the relevant item in the supplementary estimates to be reduced to \$1.

Mr. Howard: I see.

Mr. Fairweather: Would the minister do his best to see that the impossible word "fall-off" is not used again? It is gobbledegook.

Mr. McIlraith: Hear, hear.

Item agreed to.

The Deputy Chairman: This concludes the study of the supplementary estimates of the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys. We shall now proceed to the estimates of the Department of National Health and Welfare.

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH
AND WELFARE

Medical Services—

20e. Administration, operation and maintenance, \$500,000.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): I should like to draw the minister's attention to a question having to do with the Canada Pension Plan. I have been told that Canadian employees of foreign embassies in Canada are not eligible for coverage under the Canada Pension Plan. One of these employees approached me to inquire why he and others like him could not enter the plan as self-employed persons paying the whole assessment. I am speaking of Canadians who are employed here in Canada in foreign embassies.

Mr. Benson: I believe this particular question was discussed during the committee hearings when the plan was considered, though I am not sure of this. However, my

[Mr. Howard.]

own department, the Department of National Revenue, which has to collect the funds for this pension plan, must act within the law as it stands. I doubt that we could deem somebody who is employed by someone else to be self-employed. I believe any change in the position of people working at the embassies would require a change in the statute rather than a ruling.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): The person who approached me was well aware that this would be the case. He asked me why a change could not be made so as to permit Canadians working for foreign embassies to enter the plan providing they paid the whole amount. Why could a change not be made in the statute to this effect?

Mr. Benson: I suppose any change to deem anyone to be anything could be made in the act as such. But the plan only came into effect on January 1 and in the initial period situations will doubtless arise which will ultimately call for changes in the legislation. I would assure the hon. lady that the particular matter she has raised will be considered when amendments to the act are being prepared some time in the future.

Mr. Barnett: As the minister has said, this matter was considered when the plan was going through the house and the committee, but I am sure that not many members realized we were dealing with Canadian nationals employed at embassies—I did not—when we made provision that the act should not apply to these people. It was not our intention to make Canadians ineligible.

Mr. Benson: As I have said, I believe a change in the act would be necessary in order to include them now. However, I undertake to look into the matter and see whether there is anything that can be done by my department administratively under the law as it now stands.

Mr. Herridge: Would the minister inform his colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, that the hon. member for Kootenay West wholeheartedly supports the request of the British Columbia Hospital Association for an increase in the federal grant from the present figure of \$2,000 to an amount which would meet the increased cost of operation?

Mr. Benson: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Barnett: I was looking into this matter just the other day in consequence of a letter I received from a hospital in my own area.