

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Apparently the Prime Minister does not intend to negotiate many treaties this year. I would rather see this item increased, if he would proceed to negotiate the treaties.

Mr. BENNETT: It is wonderful what you can do in the way of economy when you try. Nine thousand dollars will go a long way.

Item agreed to.

Grant to the Montreal Association for the Blind, \$4,050.

Grant to l'Institut Nazareth de Montreal to assist in work with the blind, \$4,050.

Mr. BENNETT: These are items for the blind that have appeared from year to year, less ten per cent. I am sorry we had to make the ten per cent cut.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I think this is one reduction that the Prime Minister might have considered a little more seriously. I have always felt that our grants to the blind are not nearly sufficient.

Mr. BENNETT: The hon. gentleman is right.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Great difficulty is experienced in carrying on this work in the various provinces in which institutions for the blind are situated. I feel that the grants have been reduced almost to the breaking point as far as they are concerned.

Mr. BENNETT: The hon. gentleman is quite correct. Representatives of the societies for the blind waited on us and explained their position. It is really a very difficult one. A delegation met me also at Winnipeg; their position is most difficult. However, it will be observed that these grants are payable to the two associations which carry on, shall I say, general operations in Montreal. In view of the representations made by all these bodies, the government felt impelled at the moment to make the ten per cent of general application. We so advised them at the time. I am afraid that not to apply it in one case, where I will admit there is perhaps a stronger claim than in others, is only to invite difficulty and continuous correspondence in which it would be urged that we did not reduce this and did reduce that. Personally I would prefer to see it \$10,000 rather than the amount it is.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I always felt that it would be much better to forego altogether the two preceding votes, to the Royal Society of Canada and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, and give the money to the blind. However, this is not

[Mr. Bennett.]

new as far as I am concerned; I merely reiterate what I said in the past when we were responsible.

Mr. BENNETT: I should like to make this observation without being misunderstood: Great as are the claims of the blind and the suffering, merely because we are passing through an abnormal condition of depression we must not overlook entirely the cultural side of the life of the country. Those two items to which the hon. gentleman refers mean the continuance or the discontinuance of the operations of the royal society and the academy of arts.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): It gives them a much better chance to be supported by private subscription.

Mr. BENNETT: They are largely supported in that way, but this means the difference between their being able to carry on and ceasing to function. As the hon. gentleman knows, the royal society came into being in the days of the late Marquis of Lorne, and I think it has discharged a rather fine service to this dominion. Numbered among its presidents are most distinguished scholars, scientists and men of letters, and it has become well and favourably known in every part of the world. One recalls that the royal society in Great Britain occupies a position of outstanding importance and has been maintained with great difficulty since the days of Newton. This society of ours is now half a century old, and its maintenance, I think, is important from the point of view of the cultural life of the dominion. It brings together scholars, thinkers, mathematicians and scientists, and when one looks through the volume of their papers one is impressed with the extent of their knowledge, the wide scope of their learning and the real contribution they are making to the national life.

Mr. MacLEAN: I should like to ask if some suggestions have been received to the effect that old age pensions should be paid to blind people before they reach the present minimum age. If such suggestions were adopted by the provinces would the federal government be willing to contribute its share of the cost?

Mr. BENNETT: The question of the payment of pensions to the blind has engaged the attention of this house for many years. Prior to the adoption of the Old Age Pensions Act efforts were made, as every hon. member knows who has served in this house for any length of time, to establish the claim of those