

member in the house who would consider it an extravagance to spend money where human life is at stake or for the relief of suffering.

I have discussed the necessity for research and the lowering of the mortality rate in cancer, preventable diseases, maternal and infant mortality, and tuberculosis. I have drawn attention to the serious shortage of hospital beds and trained personnel. Again I refer to the fact that the cost of sickness is becoming beyond the means of many people. The solution of these urgent health problems is, therefore, an adjustment among all the provinces and the dominion. The two largest provinces have not yet reached an agreement, although the premiers of those provinces have requested another dominion-provincial conference.

In view of the situation I have described regarding the over-all health picture in the dominion, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) should be the first to raise his voice in demanding a renewal of the dominion-provincial conference. If by the calling of another conference the life of even one child of a Canadian citizen could be saved, then there should be no hesitation. A grave responsibility rests upon the federal government.

Mr. MARTIN: I am sure we have all listened, and with great profit, to the address we have just heard. Let me say at the outset to the hon. member that the temper of his observations and the constructive nature of his suggestions are in keeping with the kind of cooperation which, as an eminent member of the medical profession, he has given to me since I became Minister of National Health and Welfare. While there may be one or two points on which it may be expected that we shall have different points of view, I want him to know that I shall follow with great interest, not only the speech he made tonight, but also the excellent speech he made in the house early in the present session of parliament.

I would not be doing my duty if in my first observations respecting the estimates of the Department of National Health and Welfare I did not pay what I think the committee generally will recognize as a deserving tribute to my predecessor, the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), who took over this department when, on the welfare side, there were new assumptions of responsibility which might well have taxed the ingenuity, energy and imagination of any man given that particular portfolio. Might I add that, while the work of this department is not such as to engage the headlines, it is extremely important and complicated. My daily experi-

ence confirms my earlier judgment of the great contribution my predecessor has made in this department.

The hon. member who has just spoken has pointed, and quite properly, to the general health state of this great country of ours. He will not think me unfair, I hope, if I add that in his statement he did not draw the lines which, as Minister of National Health and Welfare, I must draw in respect of the constitutional distribution of powers and responsibilities of the federal government with regard to many of the matters he has discussed. But I do agree with him, and I say to the committee that, while we spend a great deal of time in the discussion of many matters, perhaps there is no field of governmental endeavour on the federal level which touches so directly the welfare of the people of Canada as does this department.

The hon. member referred to arthritis, and perhaps later in the estimates I shall have more to say about this specific item. But I may tell him—and I announce now—that the technique we employed early in January in calling together here in Ottawa, the capital city of our country, those who were interested in cancer control, will be employed again when all the authorities, governmental and professional, in the field of arthritis, are called within a very few months, to see if we cannot provide some coordinating authority to carry on in the field of arthritis; as I ultimately hope to show we did and have done in the important field of cancer.

I am sure hon. gentlemen will regard what I am now saying not in any sense as an expression of political partisanship, because I hope we can follow the lead given by the hon. member who has just spoken in looking at this matter as one which should not divide us on a political basis. Through the officers of my department I have had an opportunity of consultation with Lord Horder who, as hon. members will know, is one of the outstanding authorities in his profession in the rheumatic field, and who has in Great Britain set up a number of investigational clinical centres for the treatment of this malady.

Likewise, Doctor Wallace Graham of Toronto, an eminent physician in this particular field, has also been in consultation with the department. These two sources, to whom I have referred, together with the Canadian Rheumatism Association, will be the basis of a conference which, I hope, will lead to an examination of all the possible avenues available to bring about some relief in respect of this painful affliction.