

Supply—Health and Welfare

Mr. Martin: Under the health grants program. The health grants program consists of tuberculosis control, general public health and one specific item of research.

Mr. Winch: Where is that?

Mr. Martin: Under No. 265.

Mr. Winch: It is not in item 265.

Mr. Martin: I undertake that the hon. member will be permitted to discuss the matter he is now raising when we reach item 265.

Mr. Winch: I just wished to be certain of my right to speak on it.

Item agreed to.

Health services—

257. Administration of the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act, §190,710.

Mr. Winch: I most certainly wish to say a few words on this item, because I presume under it we can discuss the treatment of dope addicts in Canada. We have now before us the report of the Senate committee which dealt with the traffic in narcotic drugs, and which appeared on Monday, June 20. It will be recalled that Senator Tom Reid was chairman.

About two weeks ago I found myself in a difficult position because it became necessary to divide into two sections what I had to say about the Senate report. That portion of it which dealt with law enforcement I discussed when the estimates of the Minister of Justice were before us, and I said at that time that I regretted being able to discuss only one phase of the matter at a time. I pointed out, however, that I was prepared to wait for the estimates of the Department of National Health and Welfare to discuss the application of the report to those subjects other than law enforcement, with particular reference to treatment.

As I said when we were discussing the estimates of the Department of Justice, I find the report from the other place most contradictory and difficult to understand. As a matter of fact, within a matter of a few sentences the entire report contradicts itself in law enforcement matters as well as in the matter of treatment.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare knows that I am keenly interested in this subject, and I hope he realizes that I wish to be constructive in what I say. I was most happy when I heard that the other place was appointing a special committee to investigate narcotic problems in Canada and that its report would be available to both houses of parliament. I am as disappointed with the report as I was happy with the

appointment. I think the other place was so darned anxious to get a report in that they did not do a decent or a good job.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. Perhaps the hon. member would not object if I take it upon myself once again to suggest that from the point of view of the Chair, prevention is better than cure. I would warn the hon. member, and others who may be discussing the Senate report, that they are at liberty to criticize to their hearts' content the conclusions reached in the report. However, I would ask that they offer their criticism so it could not be considered a criticism of the members in the other chamber who prepared the report.

Perhaps it would be proper to say that we should discuss a report from the other place as we would hope to have them discuss one from the House of Commons, and that such discussion should be carried on without any offensive language concerning the members of the committee or of the chamber in which they sit. If this were done no harm could possibly follow.

Mr. Winch: All right, Mr. Chairman, I understand your point. I withdraw any remarks that you think are objectionable. I shall just say I am disappointed in that section of the report of the special committee of the other place which deals with the problem of narcotics in Canada. I fail to understand the contradiction in the report, and I want to bring it to the attention of the minister. Because of the seriousness of the situation, because I firmly believe the minister is convinced of the seriousness of the situation, I am sure he would like to see something done. I should like to hear—and I hope we shall hear—the comment of the minister as far as treatment is concerned, his reaction to this report and an explanation, if there is an explanation, of the contradiction.

You will understand why I am confused, Mr. Chairman. I understand that I am perfectly at liberty to quote from the report. Look at this. A doctor right beside me says "go ahead". Just take this.

Mr. Martin: The hon. member is referring to the hon. member for Winnipeg South.

Mr. Winch: I shall read the title page:

Proceedings of the special committee on the traffic in narcotic drugs in Canada. No. 15. Monday, June 20, 1955.

I obtained this volume from the distribution office. Turn to page 663. What does it say? Under the section "conclusions and recommendations" we find the following:

The evidence of medical authorities was to the effect that drug addiction is not a disease in itself. It is symptom or manifestation of character weaknesses or personality defects in the individual.