

## Supply—Health and Welfare

to pay rental, and this equalizes those who own their homes. In other words, those living in rented houses have to pay a certain amount of rent but the man who is living in his own home does not have to pay anything.

This is a means test, and I am sure it does not appeal to the house. I wish to point out that the person who owns a home has to keep that house up and pay taxes, which are probably more expensive than a rental would be. I think that should not be brought into this question of what is called putting on a means test. This individual's wife was assessed on the basis of having worked a whole year which she did not do, but that was not taken into account. Therefore the assessment was not a proper one.

I appeal to the minister to consider this question of the means test. I am not asking for an increase in the allowance, which has been touched on frequently here; but I do think the matter of the means test and permissible income should be re-examined and overhauled, because it does not give a fair deal in the situation I have described. I shall leave this matter with the minister and hope he will give it some attention.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Chairman—

**The Deputy Chairman:** The hon. member for Kootenay West.

**Mr. Herridge:** Is the minister going to speak?

**Mr. Martin:** A great many hon. members have asked questions, but I want to be fair to everybody.

**Mr. Herridge:** I have a question which would mean just one more for the minister to answer. Mr. Chairman, I have been mute on these estimates so far for three reasons. The first is that other hon. members of this group have given expression to my feelings and opinions, and I do not believe in repeating things too often. Second, I have a certain amount of sympathy for the minister; and third, I have been absent.

**Mr. Fulton:** Why did you come back?

**Mr. Herridge:** I must say I have been absent on very important business. I have been attending a committee that has been considering the health and welfare of the hon. members of this house. We spent a great deal of time this afternoon making sure that next session they will get ample fruit and vegetables and so on in the parliamentary restaurant.

I must say that most hon. members appreciate that I am a somewhat timid soul, and I have always found myself a bit flustered

on these estimates though I do not know why. However, I am going to try to contain myself and prevent myself from panicking by keeping an eye on the minister and my future needs.

**Mr. Fulton:** Are you afraid you will get an old age pension before you finish?

**Mr. Herridge:** I rise, Mr. Chairman, to bring one matter to the attention of the minister. I have in my constituency a number of unfortunate disabled persons who have to use orthopedic appliances, and because Spokane is the nearest point where they can obtain the appliances or have them repaired they frequently obtain them there. I want to bring this matter to the minister's attention as I have been requested to do by the manufacturers of these appliances in Spokane and area, and by a number of representative organizations in my district.

Another reason for my mentioning the matter at this time is that I was absent in another committee when the estimates of the Department of National Revenue were under discussion, but these matters are related so I think I am justified in doing it at this point.

The people who wear these orthopedic appliances in some cases are not required to pay customs duty when they purchase them in Spokane or area and bring them into this country. In the case of corrective shoes and that sort of thing they have to be sent across the line in order to be repaired, and when they are returned in a repaired condition they are required to pay a duty on them. I also understand they are required to pay a sales tax on certain of these very necessary artificial aids. Generally speaking these people are in the low income brackets, and I am going to ask the minister if he will use his charm and ability and discuss this matter with the Minister of National Revenue, to see if we cannot avoid charging these people sales tax and customs duty on these very necessary articles.

**Mr. Blair:** Mr. Chairman, I wish to say a few words on the question of the disability pension. I was very glad when this pension was written into law of this country, but I find that the difficulty lies in the interpretation of the words "permanently and totally disabled". I realize there must be a dividing line somewhere, which was set forth in the terms one hon. member discussed a short time ago and those terms are necessarily in some form of legal parlance to describe the disability.

I find that the trouble stems from two sources, and one is in making out the papers. The board that is looking over the papers