

Supply—Health and Welfare

Mr. Hansell: Mr. Chairman, should the minister feel disposed to reply to the various suggestions and speeches I would ask him to give the house some further information as to what the department might be doing in the field of preventive medicine. We hear a good deal about what the department has done in respect of pensions for incurables, and various legislation covering the sick—and it is to be congratulated upon all those things. But perhaps when the minister replies he might tell us what the department is doing in the field of preventive medicine. I am sure if he did so we might be able to congratulate him upon that too.

I speak on this matter because I believe it offers a useful field of endeavour. I have in mind particularly those who suffer from arthritic and rheumatic troubles. As we know, there are many arthritics in Canada. Many organizations are attempting to tackle the problem, and they are doing all they can, I am sure. I have no doubt the minister's sympathies are with them and that he would like to help in every way possible.

I think hon. members will agree it is not enough to lock the stable door after the horse has been stolen. It is not enough to help the sick after they become sick. Of course that is a proper thing to do, and also most admirable; but it is much better to tackle the problem at its source with a view to retaining a healthy nation and keeping our people from becoming ill.

The hon. member for Fraser Valley is unable to be with us this afternoon, having been called out on other matters of importance. However, he has been sitting for some time waiting for the minister's estimates. It is unfortunate that they are called when he is not here. Had he been here, however, I am sure he would have spoken along lines I have followed. All hon. members have received many letters urging us to press upon the government the necessity of doing something further in the matter of research and preventive medicine as applied to arthritis. The hon. member for Fraser Valley let me have his file, and it is a fairly thick one. It contains letters from here, there and all over, urging that something be done on behalf of those patients. I pick up one letter which is perhaps characteristic of all of them. This is from the Canadian arthritis and rheumatism society, British Columbia division. It reads:

In view of the fact that there are 600,000 known sufferers from rheumatic diseases in Canada, we feel that there is an urgent need for a federal grant for research in this field.

Mr. Martin: There are at least 12 different grants for research in this field.

Mr. Hansell: I am happy to hear the minister say that. Perhaps he can amplify that a little further, should he reply. The letter continues:

At present grants toward arthritis research in Canada can be obtained only under general public health grants, which are quite inadequate.

The minister can say whether or not that is 100 per cent accurate.

Mr. Martin: It is not accurate; under the research grant itself.

Mr. Hansell: I continue:

I am therefore appealing to you to place these facts before the house, and to endeavour to obtain a grant comparable with that provided for research into the control of poliomyelitis. The crippling effects and high incidence of deaths in these two diseases are comparable, therefore I am sure you will agree, that the opportunities for research should also be equal.

Over 8,000 sufferers from rheumatic diseases have been treated by the British Columbia division of the Canadian arthritis and rheumatism society alone. A treatment program is costly; institutional care for chronically crippled patients costlier, and while research may be costly, it may prevent wastage of lives, money and earning power in the future.

This is one letter, but it is characteristic of the many which the hon. member and all hon. members have received. No doubt the minister himself has received many letters, and perhaps he is doing all he can in respect of the matter. There is always an urge to do more, of course.

Mr. Martin: My hon. friend would be interested to know that we have given a grant of \$78,000 to the British Columbia society.

Mr. Hansell: I am glad to hear that. I am not from British Columbia myself, but no matter where we are from we are all interested in the health and welfare of all Canadians.

Mr. Martin: On one occasion we spent some time in British Columbia.

Mr. Hansell: Yes; I appreciate the minister's remarks. I am sure we would give the minister credit for everything he does on behalf of anybody.

I should like to touch on another subject in the field of preventive medicine. I am wondering how much is being done in respect of research along the line of nutrition, or shall I say diet. There is a school of thought in Canada, and I am sure it exists in medical circles, too, which holds that diets play a tremendous part in the health of our people and in the cure of certain types of ailments.

Mr. Low: The minister is an example.

Mr. Hansell: Perhaps the minister is an example of clean living. Whether it is a