

is on the horns of a dilemma with regard to this but, as the deputy minister has said, our salary scales are roughly competitive in most areas of Canada.

With respect to nurses we have a serious problem. I cannot give the figures of nursing shortages at the moment, but they are alarming. I have had to close wards in several hospitals simply because I cannot staff them, in spite of the fact that many of the shortages occur where our salaries are definitely competitive with salaries outside. We are competing in a very tight market; nurses are in short supply everywhere. We have the added disadvantage, as I think I explained to you the last time I appeared before you, of a patient load which is not nearly as attractive as that in civilian hospitals outside. In my opinion, this is a main factor in our difficulty in obtaining nurses.

Mr. CHATTERTON: Could Dr. Crawford say if the establishment is not filled in any of our institutions? Is the establishment filled?

Mr. CRAWFORD: No, if my establishment were filled I would be in clover.

Mr. CHATTERTON: Is consideration being given to making use of specially trained practical nurses?

Mr. CRAWFORD: I think the Department of Veterans Affairs has probably pioneered in the use of nursing assistants, as we call them, as it has pioneered in many areas in hospital administration. We have met with tremendous success in this. We are using nursing assistants or practical nurses. We operate a school of our own in Halifax where we train girls who go to various hospitals in Canada. We are co-operating in British Columbia with the provincial school for nursing assistants there and helping to train girls; and we are employing nursing assistants in Victoria, as we are doing in many parts of the country.

Mr. PATTERSON: Mr. Chairman, I think it was I who raised the question regarding the situation in Shaughnessy, not Mr. Chatterton. My information is that quite a few orderlies have resigned this month, and quite a few resigned last month; and that one of the factors leading to their resignations was the low rate of pay compared with those for the non-governmental hospitals.

Is that a fact, or are there other circumstances that have entered into this situation?

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am not aware of the actual figures for the last few months, but I am not at all surprised to hear that this is so. This has been the situation for a long time. We have had trouble in retaining orderlies in Shaughnessy. The difficulty has not been with the senior orderlies; they are staying with us. The difficulty has been with the junior orderlies. On the other hand, when we bring this to the attention of the Civil Service Commission and the treasury board we must also bring to light the fact that we can recruit the junior grades relatively easily; so there is a constant flow out, but there is also a flow in. This is not a completely desirable situation, but it rather inhibits our case for pay increases for orderlies across Canada.

Mr. HERRIDGE: Is there any difficulty now in obtaining veterans who are entitled to veterans' preference to take positions in the department, and can you tell us how many non-veterans are employed in each branch of your department at the present time?

Mr. PELLETIER: I cannot answer the question precisely but I can say that the vast majority of the employees are veterans—male employees. Among the female employees, of course, there are many non-veterans.

Mr. HERRIDGE: Yes, I understand that.

Mr. PELLETIER: I have not the exact figures here, Mr. Herridge, but we will try to find the answer for you.