

Mr. RALSTON: I think that case is covered by the procedure which has been adopted. I am informed that when a hospital informs a dependent by wire that she is required because of the illness of a soldier, a duplicate telegram is sent at the same time to the dependents' board of trustees. The dependents' board of trustees, by wire again, immediately gets in touch with the local committee and has the committee get in touch with the dependent to ascertain just what is the situation with regard to transportation. The railway companies will accept a telegram from the dependents' board of trustees, or from the local committee as authorization for transportation. The only difference in this procedure from that suggested by my hon. friend is that he suggests that the provision of free transportation should be automatic. I am not prepared to go that far at the moment. I can conceive of quite a number of cases where there would be no need of providing free transportation to dependents. My hon. friend is assuming that all dependents are in the same financial position, but that is not so. I am sure that if the meritorious cases are taken care of, it will meet my hon. friend's suggestion. I did not know of this procedure when I spoke the other day about this matter.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): The procedure outlined by the minister would work fairly satisfactorily in the more heavily settled areas, but in a great scattered province like Saskatchewan some considerable time might elapse between the sending of the wire by the board in Ottawa to the committee in Regina or Saskatchewan and their getting in touch with the dependent. The dependent might be three hundred miles away from either one of these centres. She might be living on a farm where there was no telephone; she might be in a community where there was not even a branch of the legion. It would be a very complicated procedure and would take a great deal of time.

Mr. RALSTON: My hon. friend is portraying Saskatchewan as a lot more primitive than it really is. I know there are great distances, but I do not think there are many places which are not within reach of a telephone. The railway station could be got in touch with, because the station from which the dependent would leave would be known to the committee. But my hon. friend is right in this: if the system does not work, it must be made to work. That is the principle that has been adopted. I have just inquired whether or not there have been any cases in which complaints have been made, and I find there have not.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): They may not have been made to the minister, but the fact is that at a farm women's convention—this was not a convention of soldiers' dependents—the matter was brought up so frequently that they took the trouble to pass a resolution and I believe sent a copy to the minister. They sent a copy to me and I forwarded it to the minister. They thought that it was a serious problem. I was not emphasizing the distances in Saskatchewan, but it is a scattered province. Merely sending a telegram to the railway station does not mean that you will get in touch with the dependent who may be on a farm fifteen or twenty miles away. Furthermore the committee at Regina or Saskatchewan may not know anyone in the particular community who could give them information as to whether the dependent required transportation, and it might take some time to get in touch with the dependent.

Mr. RALSTON: The chairman of the board tells me that they use the postmaster or the clergyman or the priest or whoever may be able to get in touch with the dependent without delay. However, my hon. friend and I are at one in the matter of principle, and it is up to us to see that the details are worked out.

Mr. McCANN: When a new dependent arrives I think there might be a simplification of the procedure which is followed at the present time. It appears that the father of the new-born child has to make application to the board to have this member of the family added to the list of dependents. I know of instances where the fathers are overseas—

Mr. RALSTON: Overjoyed.

Mr. McCANN: —overjoyed and overseas, and of course at a time like that there is a good deal of extra expense. I suggest to the dependents' allowance board that they accept the certificate of the attending physician or a copy of the registration of birth, and that the child be given the dependents' allowance the same as the other children. That would do away with the long delay which must ensue when the application has to be made by the father, who may be overseas.

Mr. RALSTON: I will certainly note what my hon. friend has said. It sounds to me as though the evidence he suggests should be quite ample for the purpose.