

Supply—Health and Welfare

you may as well apply the mirror test. In case the minister does not know what I mean by the mirror test, may I say it is a well-known trick of physicians. A mirror is placed at a person's mouth, and if it does not fog up the person is dead. They could just as well apply that test, because nothing short of that will let him in under this act.

I see these words, and I do not say this with any thought of malice to the doctors or to anyone in particular, but I say the time has certainly come when some action has to be taken. I could bring a whole file of letters, and no doubt many other members on both sides of the house could duplicate that effort. I could read from those letters of tales of woe until the minister would be crying for help before I could finish all the cases that are still hanging fire and those that have been turned down. That is not the kind of thing I want to do. I do not want to raise the question just for the purpose of talking about it.

The minister knows, and hon. members know, that I have raised this matter on a number of occasions, and so have other hon. members. We have been told that the matter is being given sympathetic consideration, or various degrees of consideration, but I say the time has come when something concrete and definite has to be done.

In my opinion, regulations that are as stiff and inflexible as the subsections I have referred to are not expressive of the spirit of the act that was passed by this house. Those of us who were anxious to get the legislation—and some of us raised this question 10 years ago in this house—certainly felt when this act was put through that we had reached the moment when we were going to be able to do something for the thousands of disabled persons in this country. It has been a terrible let-down; it has been a major disappointment to all concerned to find the regulations drawn up in such a way as if the authorities deliberately set out to exclude as many persons as possible, rather than to include as many as possible.

I know there are always marginal cases under any kind of an act and regulations. There is going to be a line drawn somewhere; but if we are going to have a line drawn, let us include inside the act as many of the doubtful or borderline cases as possible, and not exclude them from the provisions of the act. I think the time has come when the officials of the federal department should get in touch with the officials of the provincial governments concerned, because this is one of those fifty-fifty acts, and if not during this session—that is quite unlikely now—certainly at the very beginning of the

[Mr. Zaplitny.]

next session of parliament the minister should be prepared to recommend changes to the house, or if it can be done by changing the regulations alone without changing the act, then have the regulations changed so the people who have been waiting—and many of them are pitiable cases—can be brought in.

I will not take the time of the committee to describe them; they are well known to all. They are really pitiable cases and certainly this committee, this parliament and this nation should hang their heads in shame if we cannot do a better job for our disabled persons than we have done up to this time. I hope this will be the last time it will be necessary to bring this matter up in the house.

Mr. Small: This has to do not with the various cases mentioned this afternoon and tonight; it has to do with the permissible income and regulations that govern most of them. I shall mention one case, but my remarks apply to them all. I appeal to the minister to see if something cannot be done about overhauling the regulations. This is the case of a constituent in my riding who is blind. It arises out of a review of his case by the Ontario department of public welfare, which administers the federal act. He was notified that his allowance was suspended as of January 1, 1956.

He is married and living with his sighted wife, and is permitted an income of \$1,560 a year, including his allowance. His wife owns the house they live in through inheritance. She is also employed part-time and works to augment their income, and receives \$20 a week when she works. Their assets are her home, as I previously stated, a bank account of \$108.15 and bonds valued at \$1,700. His income is \$40 a month, or \$480 a year blind persons allowance. Her income, as I stated, is \$20 a week or \$1,040 a year, if she is able to work a full year. The government insists that the assets be computed on an immediate government annuity rate, calculated at 5 per cent of the assessed value of the real property and charged against the income of the family.

This amounted to \$226.50. The department informed him that his total annual income was \$1,512.52, which would permit him a monthly allowance of \$3.85. The department also notified him that they had overpaid him by \$108.15, and that the \$3.85 a month would be suspended and applied against his account of \$108.15 until the debt was discharged or until he could refund the \$108.15 and be reinstated.

The explanation for their action in assessing the value of their home was that a person who does not own property is required