

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

in office, and I have listened at length and with sympathy to the representations which they have made. Other interested people, notably the hon. member for Red Deer whose profession this is, have also made recommendations in this regard.

My hon. friend from Kootenay West also raised a problem concerning nursing homes and chronic hospitals, and inquired why it was that the Hall commission apparently did not deal with this particular problem. I would point out that there is a difference between the two types of facilities, and chronic hospitals come within federal government participation if included in the hospitalization scheme by the appropriate province. The differentiation between that type of facility and a nursing home, which is more appropriately a welfare facility, is probably the reason the health commission felt it should not deal with the matter as coming within the scope of its inquiry. It is a difficult area, and one in which there is an increasing interest on behalf of the aged.

My own interest in nursing homes has been increased by a number of representations I have had from hon. members and interested laymen, and this is a subject of study by the department, not only in connection with the type of facility—not strictly a nursing home but a chronic hospital—which is referred to in the Hall report. I can only say to my hon. friend that any announcement regarding support would be a matter of new government policy and cannot be made at this time.

The hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale rather caught me by surprise in asking whether hospitals may be built with centennial grants. I can only say to the hon. member it is an interesting question the answer to which I do not know, and I shall have to refer him to those who are responsible when their estimates come before us; or perhaps he might direct an inquiry to them.

There was a most interesting contribution by the hon. member for Peace River, who was looking ahead, and perhaps not so far ahead as many may think, into the question of the population explosion and the pollution of air and water. It may be he is not aware of the fact that in my department there is an environmental health branch whose responsibilities encompass very close liaison and collaboration with the provinces on the matter of air and water pollution.

The hon. member suggested the setting up of a joint committee of both houses to deal with the problems which will arise from

overcrowding. His suggestion is one of great interest, although the question of overpopulation and overcrowding appears to have less application to this country than to most of the other developed countries of the world. Notwithstanding that, there can be no doubt that Canadians must take an interest in this as a world health problem which in the future, if not at home, from abroad will press upon their consciousness in the matter of food supply and other aspects. A cursory examination of a week's newspaper will find all kinds of groups, religious groups, lay groups, medical groups, showing increased agitation on the question of population explosion. I am very grateful for the comments made by the hon. member for Peace River which I shall take to heart and consider although, as he suggested, it may be some time before he sees any fruition from his suggestion.

The hon. member for Springfield, in his contribution last night and again today, as a dentist reflected his interest in things dental. He asked whether any steps were being taken to establish a specific dental health grant. I must say that at this time it is not in the contemplation of the department, although he knows there is assistance from health grants for particular dental projects. He also mentioned the matter of fluoridation, and suggested the federal government should be giving advice and direction in this regard.

He is aware, since it was elicited in response to a question put to my parliamentary secretary in my absence, of the department's view with respect to fluoridation. Oddly enough, fluoridation is a matter which evokes a tremendous emotional response. However, it is not a matter in which the federal government has any primary responsibilities, although we have undertaken studies on it. This is, as in smoking, a matter in which we can advise and consult with provincial governments, whose primary responsibility it is; and indeed in the matter of fluoridating water supplies this remains a question of local preference. However, the department has made clear its attitude with respect to the benefits to be gained from fluoridating water supplies.

A number of questions were asked last evening by the former minister, dealing with the appointment of a national welfare council for which legislation was provided during his term in office. It is anticipated that this council will be appointed later this fall. He also raised the question of whether the province of Saskatchewan had made any suggestion about a new relief program. I should like to say, as I said earlier, that this was