

Supply—Health and Welfare

will have to be approved by the House of Commons. With regard to the first question put to me, I think we all agree that there should be some uniformity in the Citizenship Courts. I know this is something on which the department has been working, and we shall continue to work in this direction. It has been announced that the citizenship branch will be transferred to the Department of the Secretary of State. This transfer will be effective when the House of Commons approves of it.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): What about the citizenship registration branch? Will that branch be transferred also? Will both branches be transferred?

The Chairman: Order, please. The hon. member for Skeena.

Mr. Howard: I did not ask when the transfer would take effect; I asked when the decision was made to make the transfer. May I follow that question with one other thought before the minister replies. It is my understanding that under the Transfer of Duties Act this sort of transfer could be made by order in council as was the transfer of the Indian affairs branch to northern affairs. The minister shakes his head and says no, that it must be done by statute. I accept the shaking of his head to this effect. When was the decision made to make the transfer?

Mr. Marchand: It was announced when the Prime Minister announced the creation of the department of manpower. He announced at the same time that the citizenship branch was going to be transferred.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Chairman, an hour or so ago I asked the minister a three part question regarding foreign decorations. I received a passable answer to the first of the three questions. I was told that Lord Thomson of Fleet, who was decorated by the Queen of Canada, had chosen to become a British subject. I also asked a question as to what happened in the case of Premier Lesage of Quebec who accepted the Order of the Phoenix from the King of Greece. Did Premier Lesage become a citizen of Greece?

Mr. Marchand: No, not that I know of. Item agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH
AND WELFARE

Administration—

1. Departmental administration, \$2,330,100.

The Chairman: Order. The committee will now proceed to the consideration of the estimates of the Department of National Health

[Mr. Marchand.]

and Welfare, Item No. 1, to be found on page 284 of the blue book. Shall vote No. 1 carry?

Mr. Rynard: Mr. Chairman, is the minister not going to make a statement?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Chairman, I do not propose to make an extended statement. I hope to have an opportunity to reply to any questions or points that may be raised by members of the committee following their participation in the debate. All I wish to do is tell the committee that I welcome this opportunity to appear before the committee in my new role of Minister of National Health and Welfare and pay tribute to my predecessors in this portfolio on both sides of the house.

I have learned since going into the department about their leadership and appreciate what they have done as much as I appreciate the excellent work being done in the department by the staff of the Department of National Health and Welfare. If hon. members wish me to direct my attention to any particular points which are raised I shall be glad to do so.

• (9:10 p.m.)

Mr. Rynard: Mr. Chairman, first of all I should like to congratulate the minister on his appointment to the Department of National Health and Welfare. I do not know whether this is a rest from labour or how he got this appointment but I am very glad to see him associated with this department. I was also very pleased to see the hon. lady member for Westmorland appointed as his Parliamentary Secretary and I am sure she will make a very capable assistant. This situation is all the more charming because the hon. gentleman is a bachelor. I am sure the hon. lady will help smooth out the difficult ruffles because ladies usually tend to lend a more sympathetic ear to human problems, with which the Department of National Health and Welfare is very much concerned. In all seriousness, Mr. Chairman—I have now been distracted from my speech, and am slightly embarrassed—I should like to congratulate the minister and his lovely assistant.

At this point I want to deal briefly with medicare and some of the problems inherent in it. Medicare was a plank in the Liberal platform, added very hastily and proclaimed across this country in a promise that we would have an almost universal medicare plan, 95 per cent, by 1967. In this regard I have grave doubts.