

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

I just want to deal with another couple of paragraphs, because I think they are quite interesting when you consider the fact that so many people criticize this sort of legislation as contributing to the welfare state, and the belief that the welfare state is going to undermine the initiative and enterprise of the citizens of the country. I am quite sure everyone will agree that the citizens of Sweden are known as a freedom-loving and enterprising people, equal to any in the world today. This paragraph is rather interesting in that connection:

The Swedes have none of the squeamishness about public medical care that many Americans have.

Of course this is written for the American public.

Even before the new plan went into effect, no Swede, for example, hesitated to go to a public hospital. Indeed, he did so as a taxpayer exercising his right, just as he felt free to call on the fire department to save his house. He did not think of the public hospital as a place of last resort, an institution maintained chiefly for the benefit of the indigent sick. Rather, no matter what his social position or his financial circumstances, he went because he knew that the medical and surgical skill there is so high, the diagnosis and therapeutic services so expert that he could find no better care anywhere.

The article goes on to describe the financing of the scheme and certain details of administration. This appears to be a very sound and successful scheme which is serving an enterprising people well. I think it is a scheme that in many respects could be applied to Canadian conditions and to which we could very well give serious consideration.

Now, Mr. Chairman, that is all I am going to say at this time in connection with a national health insurance scheme. I do want to bring to the minister's attention one or two matters which I was asked to raise particularly. I listened with interest to the member for Macleod, who raised the question of increased grants to universities for research.

**Mr. Martin:** Would the hon. member permit me to interrupt just to point out that these specific questions could be dealt with very easily on the various items. We have had a general debate now, and I suggest it makes it easier for me to answer questions if they are asked under the individual items rather than in a general debate.

**Mr. Herridge:** I shall accept that suggestion and deal with them at greater length than I had intended.

Before concluding I must say that all of us in this group, and I think the majority of Canadians, recognize the excellent work the Department of National Health and Welfare is doing. I know we are very fortunate in having the department served by a very

capable and efficient staff which I do not think could be excelled anywhere in the world. Now, Mr. Chairman, we have the department and we have the staff; all that is required is the legislation to provide health insurance for all Canadians. We feel now is the time to legislate for health insurance in Canada. In the face of the present circumstances and all the facts, no excuse for its delay can be accepted by the Canadian people.

**Mr. Castleden:** My remarks will not be very lengthy.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Castleden:** Of course I can accommodate that group by making them longer if that applause means I should do so.

**Mr. Martin:** I wonder if my hon. friend would want to assist? He could deal with health insurance under the item for health insurance studies.

**Mr. Castleden:** I do not want to deal with health insurance. I think it has been well covered.

**Mr. Martin:** I felt a little guilty about interrupting the last speaker, and when he was so generous in acceding to my request I thought in fairness to him I should make the same request of my hon. friend if he is going to deal with a specific question with which we could deal quite easily under one of the items.

**Mr. Castleden:** It is a general question which would not come under a specific item. My complaint is not so much actually with the department, but perhaps that the fiscal policy of the government has taken away a good many advances that have been made during the past few years. My mind goes back about 15 years, when the average old age pension in this country was \$16 per month and in some places even less. I remember the struggle that went on in this house in an effort to get that assistance to our senior citizens increased so it would take care of their many needs and make life more tolerable for them in the years when they were past the time they could earn for themselves. The records will show the number of times the opposition moved amendments to various government motions and upon going into supply, requesting an increase in the old age pension.

I can remember when the pension was increased from \$20 to \$30 per month. What great praise was heaped upon the government, and what great praise they gave themselves for the wonderful advances they were making. This protest continued throughout the years until we finally got the pension raised to \$40 per month, after a great deal