

share with them on a fifty-fifty basis the costs of providing treatment where such treatment would either prevent or cure blindness. We believed that this was the most substantial advance which could be made in our programme in dealing with this problem; the best way to deal with a blind person is to cure his blindness.

Studies made thus far indicate that a considerable proportion of blindness is either avoidable or curable, and we were prepared to assist in that work as I have mentioned. That survey and research are being continued. We hope also to do some research as to the causes of blindness affecting particular communities. One hon. member referred to the heavy incidence of blindness in New Brunswick. It is quite notable that in certain parts of that province the rate of blindness is probably three times as great as that in other parts of the country.

Mr. MacNICOL: Why?

Mr. CLAXTON: Nobody knows why; we would like to find out. It may be due to nutritional deficiencies. We would like to cooperate with the provinces and with other agencies in finding that out and in endeavouring to see that, whatever the cause may be, it may be corrected in the future.

I am very glad to say that the suggestions of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind are very largely those of the government, and that they were put forward in the way I have indicated.

With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Swift Current concerning arthritis, I have very little to add to what was said the other evening when this matter was discussed fully, as set out at page 2070 and following of *Hansard*. The hon. member has said, "we should do something about it". That is one of those things it is very easy to say. As the hon. member for Lanark has said, the question is: What can we intelligently do about it? What can we as a federal government do? That was the question I raised when the matter came up before.

Mr. BENTLEY: I am not going to make a recommendation of what the minister can do, but I think something should be done. The only thing to do is, I believe, to follow up the recommendations of others, by way of making grants to organizations which are undertaking this research, or set up a federal research branch. Does the minister intend to do that?

Mr. CLAXTON: So far as I know, the Canadian rheumatic diseases association has [Mr. Claxton.]

no programme calling for any research, whatsoever. If it has that intention, such representations have not been made to me.

Mr. BENTLEY: Why not do it through your department?

Mr. CLAXTON: I went into that matter at some length, and I think the view I put forward carried the judgment of the house that the best procedure, so far as research is concerned, was not to have the federal government set up a new institute or agency to conduct fundamental research. We do not believe that is the most efficient way of using the resources of Canada. We believe that the best way is to assist those who require assistance in research, and who are competent to do research in those places where they are doing it or where they are able to do it.

Rheumatic diseases and arthritis are conditions which should be worked at not only by fundamental research workers but by clinical research workers, where patients are available. Those places would be the great teaching institutions and the hospitals in the larger cities. The most important work being done in this field is probably that being done by the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Toronto East General hospital, where 100 cases of arthritis are continually under examination by two officers specially trained in that field, and where they have a team of specialists working in conjunction.

As the hon. member for Lanark pointed out arthritis is a condition. We do not know what the disease is, but there are possibly thirty or more varieties of it. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to diagnose and to prescribe the best treatment.

The hon. member referred to the fact that there are probably 600,000 persons suffering from arthritis in Canada. There may be more than that, because lots of people over forty years of age have some sort of condition which might be described as arthritic.

Mr. FLEMING: A lot of ball-players in this house have been suffering from it since last Wednesday night.

Mr. CLAXTON: Yes, there has been a lot of it since then; since we suffered that trouncing on Wednesday night, we have been feeling an arthritic condition in the last two days.

This matter of arthritis is one of great concern, and if there is anything we can do effectively, I should like to see it done. But the manner we have suggested, of working through the national research council, and assisting those who want assistance to do work