

Supply—Health and Welfare

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE
Health services—

574. Administration of the Opium and Narcotic Drugs Act—further amount required, \$18,150.

Mr. Blair: I simply want to ask the minister if there has been a necessity for increased prosecutions under this act, or has there been an additional demand for prosecutions?

Mr. Harris: This is due to an increase in the number of narcotics prosecutions and the development of several complicated and therefore costly cases, amounting to \$17,000; consultations with the provincial authorities regarding the revision of the Opium and Narcotics Drugs Act, \$150; increased storage charges on motor cars seized under the act, and other costs of \$1,000.

Item agreed to.

575. Indians and Eskimos health services—operation and maintenance—further amount required, \$700,000.

Mr. Blair: Would the minister explain this additional \$700,000? Is that for additional hospital services, or how is the amount broken down?

Mr. Harris: There is \$550,000 for hospitals, doctors and other professional special services, and an additional amount for traveling in remote areas to make up the balance.

Item agreed to.

576. To authorize and provide for general health grants to the provinces, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory upon the terms and in the amounts detailed in the estimates—further amount required, \$1,000,000.

Mr. Knowles: Will the minister indicate whether this item involves any extension of the health grants program?

Mr. Harris: No, it is just that construction has been successfully completed and we have done more work than we expected, to the extent of about a million dollars.

Mr. Hodgson: Does this item include the pleasure trip of the *C. D. Howe* every year for the has-been Liberals to look at the Eskimos?

Item agreed to.

Welfare branch—

577. To provide for a reduction in the amount owing by the old age security fund pursuant to section 11 of the Old Age Security Act, representing the amount of temporary loans made by the Minister of Finance to the fund during the fiscal year 1956-57 estimated at, \$6,000,000.

Mr. Green: Will the minister explain item 577?

Mr. Harris: Yes. In the blue book, as hon. members know, we try to estimate the deficit, and in the past I have asked the house, and they have kindly agreed, to vote the deficit in this fund from the time I became

[Mr. Harris.]

Minister of Finance. This is our estimate of the amount required to March 31 to complete the payment into the fund of the deficit incurred in excess of payments over receipts. It is the smallest amount we have ever had and indicates that the fund is almost self-sustaining and would be self-sustaining, as I indicated in the budget address the other night, this coming fiscal year if we had made no change in it. This will bring us right up to date.

Mr. Green: Is any consideration at all being given to changing the regulations with regard to residential qualifications? For example, is any thought being given to reducing the length of time a recipient must live in Canada, or any change in order to make it possible to make these payments outside Canada? As the minister knows, this question has been raised on different occasions in the house and we have been led to believe the department is considering some changes. Perhaps the Minister of Finance could tell us today just what are the prospects for having a revision of these regulations.

I do not think it can be questioned that the regulations are much too severe at the present time. For example, take a person who is retired and wishes to go to the United Kingdom to live. He cannot draw this old age security, though he has been contributing toward it over the years. As the minister knows, the Old Age Security Act is in the nature of a contributory act, and people are entitled to the payments as of right. Surely at some time we shall reach the point where a person can live outside of Canada and still draw those payments. What is the situation at the present time?

I know of some cases which are very unfair not only in the way I have suggested but also in other respects. For example, one man had been a correspondent in the United Kingdom of one of our newspaper chains for quite a number of years. When he retired and came back to Canada the time he had spent in the United Kingdom working for a Canadian company disqualified him for the old age security payments. There are many features of that type which should be removed.

What I am wondering about is whether any steps are being taken to see that they are removed, or is the department simply coasting along and making no attempt whatever to improve the regulations?

Mr. Harris: Mr. Chairman, I know the Minister of National Health and Welfare is not coasting along on this subject, because he is considering the problems which have arisen in what, after all, is about five years' experience with this plan.