

Supply—Health and Welfare

pretty comprehensive without too high a cost. We recognize the need for the governments of Canada at all levels, municipal, provincial and federal, to get together and work out a program which will bring medical and hospital costs within the reach of all of our people.

When I say that, Mr. Chairman, I am speaking from some experience in the provincial field. I had to administer the finances of my province for some years and to dig up the money with which health services could be advanced to the people. For a moment I should like to expand on the principle I enunciated a moment ago as being the one we favour at the moment. We may change our minds as studies of the whole matter of national health insurance make progress. I notice in the minister's estimates an item providing certain sums of money to pay for the studies that are going on. I think that is all to the good, and as progress is made in these studies we may change our minds; but at the moment we lean to the view that the various governments should follow more or less the type of program we have been following in my province.

It may interest the members of the committee to take a moment to look at the kind of thing we are doing. I have in my hand the latest budget speech of the minister of finance of the province of Alberta, which sets out on page 19 a table of health services financed by the provincial treasury. These are services financed entirely by the provincial treasury, under the scheme I described a moment ago as one designed to bring costs down to a level within the reach of every person in the province. I think it has done that. For example, this year it is expected that the provincial government will pay \$1,744,350 for the purpose of taking care of tuberculosis patients. That is the total cost. It is not shared by the municipal governments at all. In our province we felt the wise thing would be to have these costs transferred to the provincial government, with assistance from the federal government. I must recognize that that is true. The federal government shares these costs in the case of the tuberculosis hospitals. In the first place they contribute \$1,000 per bed for the building of the hospital.

Mr. Martin: Practically all the tuberculosis equipment is ours.

Mr. Low: I think that is true.

Mr. Nicholson: Were these sanatoria not built before the federal government came into the picture?

Mr. Low: Not all of them. After the federal government came into the picture I think we built Memorial sanatorium in Edmonton, and we did receive a grant.

Mr. Martin: We have helped to provide about 1,200 tuberculosis beds.

Mr. Low: That is true. In the province of Alberta we also do something similar to what the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar suggested was done in Saskatchewan with respect to cancer treatment. The net cost for the year to the province is considered to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$300,000. There is a feature of health services in my province which I think is quite unique in Canada but which is, I believe, a pattern that may be followed by other provinces later, perhaps with help from the federal government. I refer to the field of maternity hospitalization, where this year the government of that province will pay \$2,554,300 as the complete cost of hospitalization for expectant mothers. They are granted up to twelve days of hospitalization free of charge, and that is paid by the provincial government.

When I thought of that, together with the dollar a day hospitalization available in the province, I decided to take a good look at the bill I received when my youngest son was born here in the province of Ontario. When Mrs. Low came back from the hospital after being there for seven days I was presented with a bill for \$84 and some odd cents, being over \$12 a day. When I thought of the situation back home I decided I would have my next baby in Alberta.

Mr. Castleden: How long were you in?

Mr. Low: I must say it was a tough pull for the old man.

Mr. Martin: Is my hon. friend always in control of that kind of situation?

Mr. Low: Yes, that is right.

The province of Alberta also recognizes the importance of adequate care of our mental patients. Hospitals and equipment are provided, and as many psychiatrists as possible. It will take \$4,609,150 to meet the cost of that service to the mentally deficient this year.

In addition to that, for a good many years our province has felt it was desirable to subsidize our hospitals, which are municipally run or run by private associations, like the various orders of the sisters in the province. We felt it was desirable to grant them subsidies at the rate of 75 cents per patient per day. This has been going on for a good many years, and this year we will have to pay out something in the neighbourhood of \$3 million for that service. It is well spent,