

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

old country. I believe anybody in that position should be counted as a Canadian and should be able to get the payment.

Another group of cases concerns people who have been away within the last 20 years. There is a provision in the act to the effect that unless they were in Canada during the period before the 20 years started to run for twice the time they were away in the last 20 years, then they cannot qualify. That is in section 3, subsection 1, paragraph (b) (i) of the act. It reads:

(i) has been present in Canada prior to those 20 years for an aggregate period at least equal to twice the aggregate periods of absence from Canada during those 20 years.

I believe the time has come to take a second look at that provision. Instead of requiring double the length of time prior to the commencement of the 20-year period, surely that should be made an equal length of time, or having resided in Canada for a total period of 30 years even though part of the last 20 years was spent out of the country. I know of several cases where this ruling has come into effect, and I think it is very unfair.

Another case concerns those who have resided in Canada for the necessary length of time and qualified for the old age security payments, and then wish to retire in the United Kingdom. That person has made his or her contributions and surely should be entitled to the old age security payment. Under the present legislation he loses out; he cannot get the payment.

Why is it not possible for Canada, if she will not make the payments direct to these people who go to the United Kingdom or any other part of the commonwealth, to negotiate an agreement with the United Kingdom under which the payments would be made. There is an agreement of that kind, I believe, between the United Kingdom and Australia and another one between the United Kingdom and New Zealand. My facts may not be accurate, but that is what I am told, that there are agreements between these nations of the commonwealth under which if the old age security recipient moves to the other country he or she will still be eligible for the payment.

I think, too, there should be a change made so that a person who has reached 70, and who has to go south for health reasons, can still qualify for these payments. There are not a great many of these cases, but every so often you run into one where it is a matter of life and death. If the person is to survive at all he has to go to a milder climate. I do suggest consideration should be given to making a person in that category eligible for the payment.

[Mr. Green.]

These regulations are too rigid. For example, on the west coast we have the boundary in one place running across a peninsula which is called Point Roberts. The tip of that peninsula is in the United States and the rest of it is in Canada. We have a large group of people from Vancouver with small homes just over the boundary on the United States side of Point Roberts. They buy all their groceries in a store on the Canadian side. Their money is all spent in Canada, but they live in the United States a few feet over the border. Some of them have spent all their lives in Canada, yet they are disqualified for old age security. That is a ridiculous state of affairs, and I do not think it was ever the intention of this parliament that people in that position should be disqualified. I am sure if the minister himself will look into that situation he will be able to find some way out of the difficulty.

Then, finally, the minister's department has the responsibility for people on old age security. I should like to know what the views of his department are with regard to having housing schemes which are to be used by old age security recipients exclusively, or to a large degree. I ask that for this reason. Another department of government is saying that if there are, I think it is, over 30 per cent of the occupants in a scheme of this kind who are on old age security, then the dominion government will not permit the scheme to go ahead.

We have had a case of that kind in Vancouver where the city has suggested a scheme, I think it is under section 36 of the National Housing Act—I may have the wrong section—under the section which calls for co-operation among the city, the province and the federal government. I believe the city and the province are willing to go ahead with a scheme for housing which will be for old age security recipients exclusively, but the dominion government, under the Minister of Public Works, is refusing. It says it is not right to let senior citizens occupy a housing scheme exclusively. This other department of government wants them mixed up with a whole lot of younger people.

I would like to know whether the Minister of National Health and Welfare thinks that is a sound policy from the point of view of those senior citizens? In Vancouver we do not think it makes any sense at all. The result of the refusal of the Department of Public Works to authorize a scheme of this kind has been that there is not any scheme at all. I should like to hear from the Minister of National Health and Welfare whether his department has objections to a scheme such as has been proposed by the city and apparently approved by the province.