

## DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

200. Departmental administration, \$531,954.

Mr. WRIGHT: I wish to ask the minister some questions on administration as it applies to the family allowance.

Mr. MARTIN: May I suggest to the hon. gentleman that if he has any specific question relating to any particular item he might wait until the item is called. On the administration item the practice is, if any hon. gentleman wishes, to make a general statement. In the interests of economy of time and clarity and completeness of discussion, it is desirable to put questions on each item as we come to them, when I shall be glad to answer them to the best of my ability.

Mr. BLAIR: In speaking on the health and welfare estimates, I find it difficult to understand why more time is not spent on the question of health in this house. We can spend hours and days in discussing the question of defence or a potential enemy of Canada; yet disease is the greatest enemy of this country. It is constantly attacking our citizens, and the only time we have to allot to health in this parliament is a few hours when the health and welfare estimates come up. But all the time this major enemy of the people is constantly attacking them.

The most important asset of any country is its people. The only sound foundation upon which a prosperous and happy nation can be built is the good health of each of its members, and the health of the country and the health of the people should be the primary concern of the government. The ultimate objective of public health should be to bring to everyone an equal opportunity to attain physical and mental health, regardless of race or economic status. During the war years, economic conditions were, on the whole, favourable to public health. However, certain adverse factors also played their part. Public health services often had to be reduced because of shortage of personnel. Medical and nursing services were inadequate in many localities, and the expansion of public health facilities were greatly slowed down. There are six main factors necessary to a proper health programme. I shall tabulate them.

1. Government financial aid and direction.
2. Research.
3. An educational programme, in order that public support may be given to the plan.
4. Sufficient hospitals and other institutions concerned in the care of the ill.
5. Sufficient doctors, nurses, and trained assistants to carry out a health programme.

6. The amalgamation of all organizations by government authority.

Costs of medical care of all kinds have increased tremendously during the past twenty-five years, as new methods of diagnosis and treatment have been discovered. Costs of medical services are increasing, but the ability of the people to pay is not increasing. Medical science is making great strides, but the application of medical discoveries has not made progress in the treatment of all the people. It is the duty of the community and the state to care for the poor and unfortunate who are unable to seek or procure proper attendance. Unfortunately, people in the lower income brackets, who formerly were able to pay for medical attention, are no longer able to do so on account of the high and increasing costs of hospitalization and attendance. Even in the most severe illness, they cannot afford the necessities such as special nurses or hospital services. Unless an illness is acute, these people are forced to neglect chronic conditions for financial reasons. It is regrettable that children belonging to these families cannot have defects corrected at a time when such correction would be most beneficial to them. The development of good citizens in a country like Canada is of the greatest importance, since the future of the nation depends on the physical, mental and moral health of the young people.

We are entering upon a new era in the fight against disease. To be successful, it will call for unselfish leadership, the co-operation of the whole medical profession, and the interest and financial support of our citizens. All interested bodies should work together in promoting the health services we visualize. While important discoveries in treatment have been made over the past decade, yet problems such as cancer remain to be solved. Unless we find good researchers, and provide laboratories and funds for them, it will be difficult to reduce the tremendous sums spent annually on disease in this land. It will require the highest standards of scientific talent, supported by adequate facilities as well as finances. The medical research scientists of Canada are second to none, and I firmly believe that our Canadian scientists who have solved many problems in the past could, if given opportunities and financial help, find the clue to a cure for cancer.

Demands for government intervention are increasing with respect to the treatment and control of cancer. There has been a new impetus and a new hope of success in the war against this disease. It is a great misfortune that a sum of \$500,000, known as the