

Supply—Health and Welfare

servants of my department, the two ladies who sit in front of me tonight, who are the first female jewels of the government service to sit on the floor at the same time.

The hon. member for Danforth has brought up a question involving income ceilings. I wonder whether he and I could have a talk about that either tonight or tomorrow and see if there is not some way out of this situation. I think I can say that tonight's discussion has been of very great value, and I am sure it has produced some very good results.

Mr. Green: Could I ask one question arising out of the minister's answer? Has an attempt ever been made to negotiate a reciprocal treaty with the United Kingdom concerning payments to the senior citizens who move from one country to the other?

Mr. Martin: I forgot that. I apologize to my hon. friend. I do not think I forgot many things in my roving picture. We have thought of that a good deal and we have had discussions with the authorities in the United Kingdom. One of our officials was there quite recently at a conference when this matter was discussed. There are great difficulties because of the difference between the various schemes, but I can assure my hon. friend that the matter is receiving our attention. As a matter of fact one of our officials is going next week to a conference in the United States to see whether or not any possibility exists there. In any event, the matter is being canvassed and studiously pursued.

Mr. Barnett: At the suggestion of the minister I agreed last night to defer bringing forward for a few minutes a matter which I had made a pledge to myself that I would bring up some time during this current session. I refer to bringing forward for consideration the need for the guiding allowance without a means test for the blind persons of Canada. I have not previously raised this question during the session except on one occasion on the orders of the day, when I asked whether the minister intended at this session to bring in legislation to provide for this measure. The minister at that time said, in one of his characteristic replies, as recorded on page 4550 of *Hansard*:

My hon. friend knows these matters are always under consideration. Much will depend upon the progress of debate here and further consideration.

I do not know what the minister's views are about the progress of debate since that time, or exactly what was involved in that further consideration. However, I recognize that as a result of statements made by the Prime Minister when questions have been asked as to the intentions of the government

[Mr. Martin.]

with regard to bringing forward further legislation this session, it is evident that it is not likely that the minister will have the opportunity of bringing in this legislation, which I am sure he would really like to be doing.

As most members may perhaps be aware from some publicity that has been circulated, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the Canadian Council of the Blind have launched a joint appeal for this one specific improvement in the blind persons legislation in Canada. One of the reasons I in particular wanted to say a few words on this was that I had an opportunity and privilege last fall, on that particular occasion at least, that was enjoyed by no other member of this house, and that was to be able for a few hours one evening to sit in on the national convention of the Canadian Council of the Blind and hear the proceedings at that convention which was being held in Victoria, which is no great distance from my own home.

I should like to say that if on other occasions that convention is being held in some other parts of the country, any hon. member of this house would find it well worth his while to sit in for a time on that convention. I found it rather an inspiring experience to see a convention being conducted by people who are not able to enjoy the privilege of being able to see one another. The chairman appeared to recognize every delegate by his voice, and the convention was being conducted in an orderly and, in fact, in a very ordinary manner. I must say that I was tremendously impressed by the courage of those people who were there. Yet at the same time it was brought home to me, in a manner in which it had not been before, what a disability people who have not the benefit of sight are facing in all the ordinary things that most of us take for granted as we go about our daily business.

For that reason, as I said at the outset of my remarks, I made a pledge to myself—I certainly did not make it to anyone there—that at some time during this session I would make some reference to the need for this particular legislation.

Our discussion during the course of this evening, and particularly since we have had several items under joint discussion, has ranged over rather a wide field, to the need for various forms of pensions and help to those who are partially or completely unable to help themselves, but I feel that this discussion certainly would not have been complete without some reference having been made to what I consider to be a very important case of needed legislation which, in