

*Health and Welfare Act*

attempting to eliminate or restrict the activities of government in the field of social welfare. It is regrettable that those forces are at work promoting the concept that we have no need to assist those of our citizens who are in want from time to time through no fault of their own, but this bill is to be welcomed in that it says we need to make further inquiries, studies and moves in the field of welfare.

No doubt there have been abuses committed by a relatively small number of people who are in receipt of so-called social welfare benefits, as distinct from types of welfare payments in the nature of pensions. I know that on occasion in my own province recipients of social welfare benefit have spent most of it on liquor and thus denied to their families the subsistence and assistance which the payments were designed to provide. In fact there have been cases of people taking taxis from the social welfare office down to the nearest liquor store or beer parlour. This is well known, and it is regrettable that such things take place. Because people in some instances tend to abuse welfare assistance, an excuse is found by those who want to destroy the concept of social welfare, and they use these isolated instances to promote their own ideas.

By establishing a council, such as is envisaged in this bill, we may be able to move in the direction of overcoming that attitude on the part of some Canadians, the attitude which says we do not need this sort of assistance, and the council may also be able to recommend action to correct and balance out the abuses which occur from time to time.

In this connection I understand that at the third meeting of provincial premiers in Victoria this year one of the communiques issued suggested that an effort be made to attach some sort of productivity or work to social welfare benefits. That is not an undesirable thing, in my opinion, and I am sure people who are out of work would far sooner be doing something constructive rather than merely being the recipients of what they look upon as a charitable contribution from the public purse. I suggest that such work should be directed toward the beautification of our municipalities, and I further suggest that it be paid for at decent rates of wages, not substandard rates as existed during the thirties but rates of wages equivalent to those for comparable work done by other people within a community, and that those rates prevail during whatever period is involved in absorbing all the social welfare funds provided.

This would accomplish two things. It would give the individual recipient a sense of contributing to the community, and it would

tend to weed out those people who are solely and simply concerned with abusing the structure of social welfare services.

I am not too pleased with the fact that this bill, as does the statutory provision which established the dominion council of health, seeks to place the meetings of this council in the hands of the minister at such times and places as he may decide and direct. Having in mind the person who now holds the position of minister, this is perhaps perfect. I do not think there is any doubt or question in anybody's mind that the minister who now holds that position will conscientiously and deliberately do everything he can to make this particular council function in the best way it can. But I think it is unwise to be legislating in such a way that we place control over this sort of council in the hands of a person of political stature. I am not saying this unkindly to the present minister at all, but he is in a ministerial position and is a person of political stature, and can misdirect or misuse authority which may be placed in his hands. Perhaps at this late stage this is something for future consideration with respect to this council and any other similar types of advisory bodies, but I would far sooner see statutory authority for calling meetings put in the hands of someone other than a political figure.

Second, I do not think it is too wise to give to the governor in council the authority to prescribe what the duties and powers of such a council should be. I think wherever possible this should be set out in the statute because, as we all know, over the years there has been too much growth in the matter of the cabinet, which is the governor in council, making decisions and deciding things which are primarily the right and function of parliament itself. I think we would have had a better concept of what we are trying to do in this regard if the minister, when he introduced this bill, had set out in it the powers and duties of the council so that parliament would have had an opportunity to deal with them. This would also establish that it is not the minister, a political head, who decides when and where the council is going to meet.

I merely raise those points now, realizing that it is perhaps a bit late to do anything about them. Perhaps even at the second reading and committee stages it was too late to do anything about them. But I think this is something that should be kept in mind in future when this type of legislation is introduced, to ensure that councils should be able to meet and do things without too much potential interference from people in political