

Suggested Reduction of Pension Age

those in need and to give the minimum required to all citizens. I said and I repeat, without any shortsighted partisanship, that anyone sitting on this side of the house can be proud that he stands for a political philosophy which provided for the setting up of the finest social security system one would find. When the national pension plan comes into force—I know it is the deep desire of any hon. member that this plan should have national scope—it will be a crowning piece of which any Canadian can indeed be proud.

Mr. Remi Paul (Berthier-Maskinonge-Delanaudiere): Mr. Speaker, we must commend the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Mather) for the resolution he brought before the house, which provides us with an opportunity to state a point of view which I think is shared by all hon. members.

When I heard the hon. member for Lotbiniere praise this government without any reservation, I looked back to the amendment moved by the official opposition, to grant a \$10 raise to our senior citizens, starting April 8. Well, the hon. member for Lotbiniere voted against that proposal.

Such is not the case with the resolution now before us, because the hon. member for New Westminster introduced a motion to the effect that the house should consider the opportunity to grant an old age pension to any person having reached the age of 67. It goes without saying that our senior citizens, considering their contribution to the development of our economic resources, for the greatness and the prosperity of Canada, are expecting, and rightly so, a generous treatment from the federal government.

But, on the other hand, I feel we should not think only of older people but also of those who are not yet old enough to be entitled to the old age pension. Even if the principle set forth by the hon. member for New Westminster is acceptable to all members, we still must not forget that those who are in need and between 65 and 69 years old can receive the old age assistance pension.

Today, because of mechanization or automation, people 60 years of age and over find it rather difficult to get a job. Now, would it not be better if the government, instead of paying a universal old age pension to all persons 67 years of age, would spend that money on those who are 62 years old and in need, so that the maximum or minimum age at which a person is entitled to an old age assistance pension could be reduced by two or three years? There is another point to consider, and it is the difference between the old age security or assistance pensions received by married couples and unmarried persons. If the husband and wife are both

[Mr. Choquette.]

70 or over, they actually get \$150 a month. This amount enables them to meet the bare necessities of life.

On the other hand, a widow or an unmarried person only gets the \$75 now provided under the act. This is not enough, because the expenses for rent, heating and essential requirements have soon taken up all this sum which is really inadequate for a person living alone. Therefore, I wonder whether the government, through social legislation, should not consider providing more assistance to those people, as the Quebec government has done. As a matter of fact, the Quebec government presented a social security measure whereby widows and single persons 60 years old or over would receive an old age pension of \$75 a month, effective April 1. The situation of those people should retain the attention of all hon. members.

A moment ago, the hon. member for Lotbiniere (Mr. Choquette) spoke enthusiastically about the national pension plan. Everybody shares his opinion, but the Canadian people and hon. members are anxious to know when the government will come forward with a definite pension plan since, during the past two weeks, the government withdrew twice. And again this afternoon, the premier of Ontario stated in the Ontario legislative assembly that the Prime Minister of Canada had asked him, and the request had also been made to Quebec, to reconsider the possibility of adhering to a new pension plan likely to satisfy most of the requirements of the Canadian people.

No doubt, all those provisions will some day apply throughout Canada, and at that time, we will perhaps have to give some thought to this social security system which should be extended to the most needy people who would not be able to benefit from this new provision if they exceed the age limit provided for in the act.

If the hon. member for New Westminster is to be commended for introducing this motion, we must consider his comments and try to find a means of analysing the needs of the various classes of society, of those who have reached retirement age, so that we may offer to the rest of the world the example of a country which has devised a social legislation that will meet the needs of all classes of society.

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Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, first I should like to offer my congratulations to the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Mather) on introducing this motion. I think it is fair to say it is very short, clear, simple and in a very few words states exactly what the intent is. As