

and who will pay the amount of the pensions granted. The Dominion, as in the case of old age pensions, will pay to the province three-quarters of the amount paid by the province in respect of such pensions.

There are many definitions of blindness, and some of them vary considerably. Even in the same countries the definitions are different, depending upon whether they have reference to census enumeration, education, pensions, and so on. After careful consideration of many definitions it has been decided that the English definition is the most satisfactory for a Bill providing for the payment of pensions to the blind. By the Blind Persons Act, 1920, of the United Kingdom, a blind person means a person who is so blind as to be unable to perform any work for which eyesight is essential. It is recognized that this is a general definition and that it is still necessary to express what it means in terms which can be applied by medical examiners. In England the Minister of Health has set out the criteria to be adopted for the purpose of determining whether or not an applicant for a pension satisfies the definition of blindness laid down in the English Act.

We propose to take power in our Act to interpret the definition of blindness by regulation. Whether or not the regulations which are framed will follow the English practice will depend to some extent on the advice which the Government receives from the best authorities on this subject whom it is able to consult. I think it is important to point out, however, that in the definition which we are adopting the test is not whether the person is unable to pursue his ordinary occupation, or any particular occupation, but whether he is too blind to perform any work for which eyesight is essential; and that only visual conditions will be taken into account, other bodily or mental infirmities being disregarded.

The Government proposes the age of 40 years as the minimum age at which pensions will be payable to blind persons. It is recognized that any age which may be fixed is bound to be more or less arbitrary and to cause injustices in particular cases. In fixing the minimum age at 40 the Government has proceeded on the principle that up to this age blind persons as a general rule are fit for a course of vocational training and may be subsequently employed. It is realized that many blind persons of more than 40 years may also be trained for successful employment, but the experience in other countries, and especially in England, appears to be that in the greater number of cases it is not possible to train persons over the age

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND.

of 40 to earn a livelihood. The English Blind Persons Act fixes the minimum age at 50, but as a result of the report of a commission presided over by Lord Blanesburgh the age is, I understand, being reduced to 40 years.

It is proposed that the maximum pension to a blind person, whether married or unmarried, shall be \$240 a year, which is the same as the maximum pension payable to a person who has attained the age of 70 years. The Bill recognizes by permissible income on a more generous scale, however, that the cost of living for blind persons is higher than for sighted persons. The permissible income for an unmarried person or a widow or widower without children is \$200 a year, and the permissible income for a married person or a widow or widower with children is \$400 a year. With respect to old age pensions the permissible income in all cases is \$125 a year and no distinction is made between married and unmarried persons. The justification for the increase in the permissible income over the old age pension provision is the higher cost of living for blind persons and the desire to encourage such persons to support themselves and their families by augmenting their pensions by earnings.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read the second time.

CONSIDERED IN COMMITTEE

On motion of Hon. Mr. Dandurand, the Senate went into Committee on the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Murdock in the Chair.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Mr. Chairman, I do not think it will be necessary to go through the Bill clause by clause. The right honourable leader on the other side has perused the Bill and sees no objection to it; on the contrary, he has expressed his adhesion to the principle. I will simply ask my honourable friend from Westmorland (Hon. Mr. Copp) to move an amendment.

Hon. Mr. COPP: I move the following amendment:

That subsection 3 of section 8A, as enacted by section 3 of the Bill, be amended by adding thereto at the end thereof the following as paragraph (c):

(c) In the case of a person married to a blind person receiving a pension under this section, by the amount of the income of the pensioner in excess of two hundred dollars a year.

Hon. Mr. CANTLEY: What is the reason for the amendment?