

Expansion of Social Security

employment to people of 45 and over, as is the case in New York state.

With regard to this matter, I think that the government imposes some restrictions with regard to the penitentiaries under federal jurisdiction by refusing employment to people over 45 years of age. Now, I think it is disgraceful to act like that.

We should see to it that our pension system is revised as soon as possible, even at this session, in order that persons who are 60 years old may receive their pension.

Mr. Speaker, I also think that medical expenses should be paid, partly, by the government. And our citizens should assume their responsibilities and part of the medical expenses, even if it is only a small amount, should be paid by the person being treated, so that it cannot be said that the government is paying for everything, is giving everything free, for we all know that nothing is free, and so that nobody can say: we do not have to pay. We know that whenever something is free, the poorer classes always pay through direct or indirect taxes.

Mr. Speaker, the social legislation put in our statute books by the various governments is fine but it does not go far enough and it would seem that our democracy is afraid to cross the threshold and adopt a measure providing for pensions at age 60. All hon. members say that each week end people come to ask their recommendation for a job. It is impossible to find employment for persons of 45 and over, even if they have a trade. In my opinion, it is the duty of the government to protect that class of citizens, to bring in legislation to correct such an injustice and to provide for the payment of a pension for all Canadians who have reached the age of 60.

Mr. Jean-Louis Frenette (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), I consider as a striking coincidence the fact that we should be considering this resolution right after this afternoon's debate on the adoption of a distinctive national flag. This reminds me of a remark one of my fellow citizens made to me last week. He seemed to feel that the government and the members of parliament were giving too much consideration to the adoption of a national flag and none at all to the improvement of the lot of the destitute and the needy.

We are all agreed with the hon. member who presented this notice of motion that it is absolutely necessary, and it is becoming more and more urgent, to revise completely

our policy in regard to social security legislation.

We are noticing every day how some of our citizens are ill provided for, how they lack financial resources for various reasons and, unfortunately, they are still ignored by those who have the responsibility of legislating to bring relief to the misery of others.

The notice of motion covers, of course, a very large field and we could very well stray far away from social security measures, but I think we will shortly have the opportunity of considering fully a measure which will permit us to make some suggestions as to the best means to improve our social legislation. As a matter of fact, we are told that a motion will be introduced tomorrow to amend the Canadian constitution in a way which as we hope, will allow setting up a pension scheme beneficial to all Canadian citizens.

Mr. Speaker, we agree to discuss this item of social legislation, and it is no secret for anybody that the political group to which I belong has, since its inception I would say, vigorously advocated some improvement in our social legislation, more particularly with regard to the welfare of our older citizens, of those who have gone before us and made Canada the pleasant place we live in today.

For a long time, Social Credit has thought about improving the lot of those people and, at this stage, I would like to read a quotation to prove my argument. It is an excerpt from a manifesto of the Canadian Social Credit organization in the 1962 election. This is what it says:

Social Credit believes that Canadians owe to their older citizens a better deal than the one they get today. Those people have built this country, working much more for less than any salary paid today. Moreover, those who have taken what, in their day, seemed to be a reasonable care of their old age, have been shamelessly robbed by price inflation. Canadians owe them a compensation for what the devaluation of the dollar robbed them of.

In 1931, a worker was earning \$1,100 a year, and an insurance policy of \$5,000 meant a considerable amount of savings. Today, those \$5,000 are hardly worth more than \$2,650 and the income earned by any worker for 4½ years now represents his average salary for less than nine months.

Older citizens in Canada have another cause for worry: the high cost of medical services and medicine at present is often beyond their means, yet they know that they will need them more and more in their later years.

Even the monthly \$75 pension granted like all the increased pensions, during an election year, is evidently inadequate to provide even a simple standard of living to those who, through hard work, have built the country that permits us to make a living today, and that gives us good earnings—provided you are employed—for much less work than in bygone days.