

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

ment grants an old age pension wholly administered by the federal government but which, afterwards, may be transferred to one of the social welfare administrations of the province.

I can recall two particular cases. The first is not necessarily one of old age pension—and I am quite willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the civil servants, federal or provincial, who conducted the inquiry which showed that the person in question, being mentally deficient, was unable to look after his pension.

As for the second case, with which I am personally familiar, it could very well be that, in some way, there was a certain abuse in the manner in which the pensioner handled his old age pension.

The party in question is 72. It is true that at that age, as at any other age, some people take a little more rope than they should. In this case, the man drinks a little and because there has been family trouble and reports have been made about him, he is deprived of the administration of his pension, even though he is quite lucid and has full control of his faculties. His old age pension is administered by the province.

I should not want to blame the federal or the provincial governments but I feel that, to a certain extent, the man should be allowed to present arguments against the government's contention if the latter withholds his pension because even if he is an alcoholic, I think that he is bright enough to look after his business. I know him personally.

This is just a minor detail, and I want to remind the minister that there are other more or less serious cases of this kind, which are sometimes left to the discretion of generally over zealous officials or of those who yield to sentiment. After all, we are all human.

As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre did a moment ago I would like to urge the minister to raise the old age pension. I would also like to suggest that the old age pension be not increased in the same way as last year when legislation was passed to raise the pension and then a tax was introduced to meet the increase.

At that time Mr. Lesage was paying an additional \$10; he, indeed, can do as he likes, but it happens that some pensioners in old people's homes, who were formerly getting \$75, had their \$10 withdrawn by Mr. Lesage, after the federal government added the same amount under the last amendment to the Old Age Pension Act, because the beneficiaries were in old people's homes. If Mr. Lesage

[Mr. Langlois.]

thought that it was logical to award them ten additional dollars before, I do not see why those senior citizens would not need them now.

Therefore, I would suggest to the minister that an agreement be entered into with the provincial governments, so that the minister or the provincial premiers who may have a tendency to act in such a way continue to give what money they were previously giving, because the person previously in need does not see the colour of the \$10 given by the provincial government when the federal government decides to give an amount of \$10 for the same purpose.

I find it strange that it is the federal government which levies taxes but it is the provincial government which benefits, because it was previously paying \$10 to pensioners in homes for old people and the latter should therefore have received \$85 but they only get \$75.

And I should like to go farther. A few minutes ago the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said that he had gone out on a limb and had the impression that he was going a little too far when as a young member he first came to the house he asked that old age pensions be raised from \$20 to \$30, while today he is asking for the abolition of the questionnaire which the 65 year old man must answer before he is allowed a pension.

I must congratulate him for the step he took several years ago and for pressing the government again today, because the \$75 old age pension is less than the \$20 pension of that time, if you consider the increase in the cost of living and what an individual needs today to survive.

It is hard to understand how a person can live on \$75 a month especially at that age when people are physically deficient and more prone to illness, the body being less resistant than it was at 20. Doctors and druggists do not reduce their rates just because the customer is 75; on the contrary, some of them may take advantage of the situation because the scheme is administered haphazardly. So, half the pension goes to pay medical expenses and the recipient has only \$38 or \$40 left to live.

Mr. Chairman, it is certainly not unreasonable to ask for a pension increase; indeed, such a step would be even more fruitful if pensions started at the age of 60.

I understand the situation. In my area, that is in Thetford Mines and the vicinity, some 600 miners have been laid off. Many