

of the British Empire. In many countries pensions are given at the age of sixty-five, and in some at sixty, while in Canada the pensionable age stands at seventy. It cannot be denied that social legislation in other parts of the empire is far more advanced than anything we have here, because the legislation they have enacted speaks for itself.

It is my wish that we may be not a backward but a forward nation. I should like the government—I do not care who does it—to take a step forward and to enact legislation which will give hope and encouragement to the great masses of our people. They are looking for something definite from the government and, so far, everything has been indefinite. I am making a plea to the government to reduce the pensionable age from seventy years to sixty-five years, so that we may take care of those older people who are no longer required in industry, and who have no hope of finding employment. I should like to see a message of hope go out from the house this afternoon to that part of our population, so that at least they may have the encouragement of knowing that in the near future they will be placed upon the pension lists and in their declining years may enjoy at least some form of economic security which, through no fault of their own, they are now denied.

Mr. BAKER: Is the hon. member aware of the fact that as the act stands at present a man has only to live in Canada twenty years to receive the old age pension at seventy? A man may come from Europe when he is more than forty-nine years old, and almost worn out physically; yet at the age of seventy he may receive a pension. Does the hon. member agree that if the limit be reduced to sixty-five, that provision should be changed? I believe it is the defect in the act.

Mr. ANGUS MACINNIS (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, in opening my remarks on the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Heaps), which I most wholeheartedly support, may I say that the point raised by the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Baker) is not an important one so far as the resolution is concerned. If people are coming to Canada at an age when they are burnt out, that defect can be looked after simply by refusing them entrance to the country, by tightening our immigration laws. But once we have let them in here, discrimination as between citizen and citizen should stop.

Questions respecting old age pensions and other social measures are being forced upon the governments of all countries. Social

questions may not be the fault of governments; they arise out of economic development. The fact is, however, that in every country of the world questions have arisen with which, whether they like it or not, governments have had to deal. As the hon. member for Winnipeg North has said, Canada has lagged behind most other countries in respect of social legislation.

So far as I have been able to learn, the matter of paying old age pensions was first discussed in the Canadian parliament in the session of 1906. The matter was raised by Mr. R. A. Pringle, who at that time was the member for Stormont. However, nothing came of that discussion. On May 1, 1922, the question was again raised by Dr. J. E. Fontaine, the Liberal member for Hull, who moved the following resolution:

That, in the opinion of this house, the dominion government should consider the advisability of devising ways and means for the establishment of a system of old age pensions in Canada.

Two years later on April 29, 1924, the then Prime Minister, who is also the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) moved:

That a special committee be appointed to make an inquiry into an old age pension system for Canada.

A committee was appointed and it reported in favour of an old age pension scheme. The most important recommendations of the committee were that old age pensions should be paid at the age of seventy years, that the maximum rate of pension should be \$20 a month, and that half the cost should be borne by the provincial governments, the federal government assuming the other half. Another two years passed before the government, under a little judicious prodding, introduced an old age pension bill.

It will be seen from reading the debates in Hansard of that year that the bill got rather a hostile reception. Although that was not so very long ago, some of the speeches make curious reading to-day. This indicates how fast we are moving at the present time and how economic changes bring about changed social conditions. The bill passed the house but was defeated in the senate. In the following year another bill was introduced which passed both houses and became law, just twenty-one years after the question was first raised in parliament. This is not very fast progress.

I believe British Columbia was the first province to take advantage of the new act. I understand its legislation was passed before the federal act came into operation. Now I submit that the time has come for a revision of the old age pension scheme as provided in