

*Labour Conditions*

Therefore, I welcome this opportunity for all of us to discuss this motion I have put before this house since 1956. The fact that we have not had an opportunity to discuss the matter since 1958 does not mean that I did not raise the question in this house. Every year in the debate on the labour department estimates, I appealed to the Minister of Labour and to the government to introduce a legislation providing for the removal of that discrimination.

The problem facing the worker who is 45 years of age or over is well known to all members of this house. It is a very serious problem and ever since I put it before the house, I received each year many representations from people all across Canada who are bent on making a stand against that discrimination.

Today, I would like to read into the official record of the house excerpts from some letters I have received.

In April 1960, I received from Mr. Xavier Lefebvre, to whom the civil service commission in Montreal had refused employment on account of his age, a letter in which he said:

I hope my government will help people over 45 to get employment in the service of our country.

A Mrs. Routhier, also of Montreal, complained also that she had been unable to secure employment on account of her age. Here is what she wrote me on July 10, 1959:

I worked as a bilingual private secretary for over 10 years. At the present time, there is an age limit, due in part to pension funds, which means that if you were not lucky enough to start working for some companies before reaching a certain age which entitles you to a pension upon retirement, you are refused employment because you are too old.

Last week I received a letter from Mr. Armand Couture of Montreal, in which he said:

—an individual 60 years old or more is too old to work—

Mr. Couture complained also about the fact that government authorities could have such a queer philosophy, and he added ironically:

At 60, a man is too old to do something good and useful for his country.

Mr. Speaker, other public men have reacted against such discrimination and to support this, I should like to quote none other than the former premier of Ontario, Mr. Frost, who stated, according to the newspaper *Le Droit* in its issue of March 10, 1959:

[Mr. Rouleau.]

We should seriously consider this situation where some people cannot get employment, even in some provincial departments, because they are 40 years old or over. A man of 60 or even 65 may be as qualified as another who is under 40.

In 1959, the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt) examined the question in the house and tried to find means of eliminating such discrimination.

The same year, Mr. Thomas Thomas, a C.C.F. member of the Ontario legislature criticized the fact that one had to be less than 45 years old to pass an examination of the Ontario government or to get a job with the Department of Transport.

The C.C.F. leader in Ontario, Donald MacDonald, then suggested that legislation should be adopted at the provincial level to put an end to such discrimination against people 45 years of age or over.

The Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Diefenbaker) himself expressed concern about the situation in a speech he made not so long ago. I would be remiss if I did not quote the comments made by the Toronto daily *Star* on March 17, 1961, concerning that speech. The article reads as follows:

(Text):

The Prime Minister himself, an energetic 67, is a demonstration that a man over 60 is not necessarily ready for the shelf. While there are many who would like to see Mr. Diefenbaker sent into retirement by the electors, it is not because age has dimmed his faculties.

(Translation):

I do not have before me the latest statistics concerning the unemployed persons of 45 and over, but I have the official statistics for 1959 which were given to me by the Department of Labour. According to those statistics, there were, on January 17, 1959, 143,000 unemployed 45 years of age and over.

The present Minister of Labour (Mr. Starr) has given the problem his personal consideration, and according to the *Ottawa Journal* for May 8, 1959, he said:

(Text):

Labour minister Starr hopes to convince Canadian employers they are taking a shortsighted view on the question of older workers. "I hope to be able to bring this home to employers across the country", he said in a Commons discussion Thursday of labour department spending estimates. He did not say how this would be done, beyond mentioning that the department's economic research branch has been making studies of the problem. Some firms were placing "ridiculous" upper age limits on the persons they would employ. A few companies would not hire anyone older than 35. Mr. Starr said it was a "downright fallacy" to think that younger workers were always to be preferred. It was also poor economics.