

Social Security

through no fault of their own, find themselves crippled, handicapped, impoverished, unhappy and uncomfortable, while we give service to others.

As was said so well by the hon. member for Lanark, the Lord has made some people so strong that, even after reaching the age of seventy years, they are still quite capable. I have known many men in politics who would have debated with vigour any suggestion that they had lost any of their ability because they had passed the seventy-year mark. There are others working in the bush who are still capable and who can do a good day's work. Then there are many men of that age engaged in the practice of law—indeed, I am sure that within the next twenty years, even after he reaches the age of seventy, the hon. member for Temiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) will still be an able man.

We must not overlook those who have been handicapped for so many years. We are strong enough and, as a country with our vast resources—the greatest of any country with a small population—we must not fail to look after those who should have been looked after first in our social security program. I am not speaking in a derogatory way about the present government; I am saying that as a country we should have looked after those people first, and that those who needed help less could have been considered later.

Mr. Jean François Pouliot (Temiscouata): Mr. Speaker, I must answer the call of the hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Rowe). First of all may I congratulate the hon. member for Terrebonne (Mr. Bertrand), who has sponsored the resolution, and also another pioneer in social legislation, the hon. member for Compton-Frontenac (Mr. Blanchette), who introduced similar legislation several years ago.

The question of giving assistance to invalids is one deserving consideration by the whole country. It is pitiful when we think of those neediest cases, to which reference was made in the Christmas edition of the *New York Times*. There have been great strides in social legislation during the last twenty years. In former years no one thought of giving a pension to the old, to the blind, to needy mothers, or providing family allowances. If someone who lived a quarter of a century ago came back to this world and visited Canada he would see the great progress that has been made in the way of social legislation.

I can remember that when I started my law practice there were very few children who were not supporting their parents. I practised for about fifteen years before giving all my time to politics and I can remember only two such cases. Then old age pensions

[Mr. Rowe.]

were brought in by the Liberal government and people over the age of seventy years are receiving \$40 per month or less. A pension of \$40 per month is paid to blind persons over the age of twenty-one years. Family allowances are paid for children until they reach the age of sixteen years.

For those people who are incapacitated but who are not blind there is a gap between the ages of sixteen and seventy years. The pension to the blind as well as the old age pension is paid jointly by this government and the provinces.

Mr. Martin: We pay 75 per cent.

Mr. Pouliot: I know that. What astounds me is that the administration of these pensions is not under the control of Ottawa but rather under the control of the provinces who pay only twenty-five per cent. It may be that the government of the day did not want to infringe upon provincial rights and wanted to make an outright gift to the provinces which would be distributed as wisely as possible to the old of seventy years and over and to the blind. When the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) took charge of the department he reduced the eligible age for blind pensions to twenty-one years.

A person of seventy years of age and over is entitled to a pension of \$40 if he is needy. If he has put aside a bit of money for his burial or for masses after his death, he must render an account of that to the pension authorities or his pension may be reduced. I must say that in past years the management of old age pensions and pensions for the blind in Quebec has been most satisfactory. I have had to write quite often to the authorities about different cases and the answers I have received have been satisfactory.

In view of the fact that there is only one branch of the department in each province dealing with family allowances it means that the member of parliament must act as the agent of the government to see that there is a proper distribution of family allowances in his constituency. That duty is added to his other duties. I do not consider it to be patronage because there is no political partisanship in the awarding of allowances and the making of requests or representations to the minister. On the other hand, it means considerable work to see that there is a reasonable and fair distribution of family allowances in the constituency.

I should like to make one suggestion to the minister who I know is on good terms with the department of health of the province of Quebec. I want to take advantage of this