

Supply—Health and Welfare

should not go on contributing 50 cents a week merely because he has exceeded 65 years of age? Is he going to be denied the privilege of doing that all the rest of his days? I do not think anyone will say that \$2 a month is excessive. Then, consider the \$3 item for medical care, and bear in mind, Mr. Chairman, that when a person reaches the age of 65, frequently he needs special medicine in order to keep well. He will be very fortunate indeed if he can buy the things which he needs to keep himself well for \$3 per month. For example, there is now a little pill containing vitamins. One of these preparations is called paramettes; we can buy 50 of them for \$3.50. If we take one of these a day it is guaranteed to give us all the vitamins which the body requires. But there is \$3.50, and that is only one of the things a person should have in an age like ours. It was different before we had learned how to make such aids as these tablets, but to have a person suffering from malnutrition today because he does not have the money with which to buy the blessings resulting from the work of modern science hardly conforms with any concept of good government. I think we will all agree that \$3 per month is not excessive for that item. Then, \$5.00 for memberships and hobbies. Memberships in clubs—is the old age pensioner, when he reaches the age of 65, and from then on until he dies, to be denied the privilege of being in a club and paying his club dues? Is he to be denied the opportunity to buy some wood or perhaps other substances to indulge in a hobby? If we say yes, we are making ourselves very cheap.

Then, there is transportation, \$4.50. With the price of transportation at the present time, \$4.50 is by no means excessive. Elderly people are at the very age when they could use transportation greatly to their satisfaction, and should use it. We come then to incidentals, only \$5. Shall a person who has reached the age of 65 not be able to buy birthday cards for his children, not be able to buy Christmas cards? Those are just a few of the incidentals. Should he not be able to go into an ice cream stand and buy a dish of ice cream? Well, that is what we are condemning them to on \$40 a month. Now, \$2 per month is allowed for laundry. I think that is not excessive.

I do not think I will repeat the items, but let every hon. member go back over them in his mind and he will find that every single item—unless it should be the paramettes or something of that sort—is produced right in this country. It is Canadian made. Why should people not be given access to the goods Canadians can make in abundance in any

[Mr. Blackmore.]

one of the wonderful provinces of this country? I suggest in all seriousness, Mr. Chairman, to the minister that we approach this matter with a positive attitude. We are doing too much negative thinking in our country altogether. We are rationing poverty when we have no right to think in terms of poverty in this land of abundance. We should be thinking positively. I will say this in reference to what the minister said. He felt that there was another place where I might more fittingly discuss this matter of financing. I am glad the committee and the chairman have permitted me to discuss it a little bit right here. Old age security is a subject we are all deeply interested in, but it is a problem which we do not know how to solve, and which I am sure every member in this house knows must be solved unless we leave our old age pensioners by the tens of thousands all over the country in penury and suffering, in malnutrition with resulting disease and early death. That is exactly what it means.

The Chairman: I am extremely sorry to interrupt the hon. member but I am obliged to advise him that his time has expired.

Mr. Blackmore: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will come on again later.

The Chairman: Shall the resolution carry?

Mr. Holowach: Mr. Chairman, those who have taken part in this debate with respect to the senior citizens, the blind, and the handicapped people in our country have all repeatedly emphasized the need of increasing the pensions of those people, and I should like to join with them in their plea and ask that the minister reconsider the matter and give such increased pensions at this time.

A few moments ago the hon. member for Lethbridge completed his remarks, and I thought that he put across one point very well, namely, that we humans can certainly behave very strangely. Here we recognize the needs of those people and acknowledge that the time has come for parliament to consider and improve the inadequacies of benefits for those people, and yet we do absolutely nothing about it except perhaps next year when an election has to be fought. May I remind the minister that these pensions are the sole source of income and livelihood for many people in our country. How they manage to live on the pension is beyond me, and yet they must. It is unfortunate that the present administration has not been able to see its way clear to increase the pensions of those people this year, not as charity or a give-away program, but as a fulfilment of the guardianship responsibilities which we have toward those people.