

*Old Age Pensions—Mr. Dunning*

age limit contingent upon the contributory feature is a sound objective to pursue, and that we should look in that direction. Indeed, I am one who believes that there is no limit to what can be worked out in the direction of lowering the age limit, provided we had a national scheme, nationally administered, and provided that the period below seventy years was made definitely contributory.

I think the experience of the British scheme gives us considerable data to work upon in that regard, and I believe that broadly our objective should be, as I have just stated, ultimately to reach a place where we would have a national scheme of old age pensions, nationally administered, and with the contributory feature prominently associated with any ages lower than the age of seventy, which is the present qualifying limit. I shall not attempt to go into further detail along that line. It would require quite a little time, but I believe that these objectives are sound.

Now, as to the course which should be taken to attain them. As I indicated at the opening of my remarks, at the present time we are in the position of not having legislative jurisdiction with respect to this matter. There are high constitutional authorities in this house of parliament who take the view that it is doubtful if we have the constitutional authority to pay the seventy-five per cent which we are now paying to the provinces. That view has been expressed on more than one occasion in this house and while I do not hold with it, at least it gives an indication of the difficulty surrounding the attainment of the national objectives which I have just described.

Therefore, we must somehow reach a place where the constitutional authority in the matter is beyond question, where this parliament can set up an old age pensions scheme of a type it deems to be desirable and also have the power to administer. When I say that, it must be remembered that I am not unmindful of the extra cost to the dominion that would be involved or of the fact that if this parliament assumes a burden which the constitution presently places upon the provinces, then this parliament must receive access to fields of taxation, sufficient to enable it to meet the added costs in a national way. If we undertake greater national responsibility, then we must have wider national fields from which to derive the revenues necessary to maintain those national responsibilities and national institutions.

My hope is that out of the investigation now being carried on by the Rowell commission into the financial relationships of our

[Mr. Dunning.]

confederation there may gradually grow up an appreciation of those services which are essentially national, on the one hand, and those services which are essentially provincial and local, on the other, and that out of it there may come an agreement that we must have a readjustment, not only of the burden of function but also of the ability to secure from the Canadian people the wherewithal to discharge that function.

I congratulate the hon. member for Winnipeg North upon having brought forward this matter once more in the manner he has. I think the debate has been constructive thus far and I am not intending to close it. However, I did want to put before the house the viewpoint of the government based upon the experience we have had and also the hope of the government for the future with respect to the solution of this problem. I believe we would be hindering rather than helping the ultimate solution by plunging in the direction the hon. member for Winnipeg North desires us to plunge.

Mrs. MARTHA LOUISE BLACK (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anyone in the house can fail to be most sympathetic with this resolution. While the resolution does not specify the granting of an old age pension at the age of sixty-five years, the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Heaps) has specified that as the age at which a pension should be granted. We all know that there are men and women of thirty-five years of age who through physical disability are perhaps older than other men and women of seventy or seventy-five years. We are not all constituted the same and we cannot all stand the same degree of work or anxiety. Eventually I dare say that this will be the age when these old age pensions will be granted.

I quite agree with the hon. minister who has just spoken when he says that any self-respecting man or woman would far rather work, no matter how difficult it may be, than have to rely upon a pension. If I had my health and strength I would not thank anybody for giving me a pension as long as I could earn enough to support myself. I do not agree with hon. members who say that the children should support their parents. We know that the great majority of children are ready to help their parents if it is at all possible, but after all these young people must make their way; they have their own children to educate, to feed and to clothe, and it is difficult for an older person to have to live on the bounty of his children or to have to live with the children or grandchildren. It is not that one does not love these children