

*Old Age Pensions*

Welfare himself will admit that there are great numbers of people in the group from sixty-five to sixty-nine who are in just as serious circumstances as those in the group over seventy, and that consideration should be given to them. Again, we all realize the unfairness of the means test as it stands in the act.

As I have said, my reason for bringing this up in the house today is that many sections of the Canadian community have had little things handed to them during the course of this session. We welcome everything that has come, even if it does seem to coincide with the eve of an election. But, Mr. Speaker, it is really disgraceful that at a time when a great many announcements are being made in the House of Commons, and when a budget is brought down which does something for a great many people, we should leave these elderly citizens, whom we all recognize as deserving, with no improvement in their impossible position.

A great many things have been announced during the course of this session which were not included in the speech from the throne. So the government need not take the position that they cannot bring it in at this time because it was not mentioned in the speech from the throne. If they will bring in an amendment now they will have our plaudits for doing so, and they will soon find the house will support them in any such proposal they may make along the lines I am suggesting.

I should like now to take a moment to cite to the government—indeed I call it to the attention of the house and members generally—that when a change is made in the eligible age there will also have to be a change in the percentage distribution of the cost as between the federal and provincial governments. I have done considerable work with figures on this matter, all of which adds up to a huge table which I shall not read and which I shall not ask permission to place on *Hansard*. After all, it would take up a great deal of space.

What I have done, however, shows what it would mean to the provinces if the age limit were lowered to sixty-five and the provinces were asked to keep on paying 25 per cent of the cost of old age pensions. The fact is—and the figures I have worked out prove it—that that would be prohibitive. The amounts the provinces would have to pay if they were to pay 25 per cent of the pension between sixty-five and sixty-nine in many cases would be equal to the total amount they are now paying on old age pensions; and in at least one case it would be in excess of the total amount the province is now paying for old age pensions.

[Mr. Knowles.]

If the government accedes to our request to increase the amount and lower the age at the same time the burden of the 25 per cent share of the provinces would be so impossible that many of the provinces would not be able to accept the change.

Thus when the government brings down the proposal, which I hope it will do at this session, to increase the amount and lower the age, and to do away with the means test, at the same time they will have to make a change in the distribution of the cost. I urge that, not just because I want to protect provincial treasuries, but in the interests of the old age pensioners themselves. I know that if an amendment merely lowered the age to sixty-five and did not change the 75-25 ratio many of the provinces would say that they could not take advantage of it because the cost would be too great; so the age limit of seventy would still stand, or the increase in the amount would not be passed on.

It is not necessary to deal at greater length with this matter. However I feel it is one which the house should present to the government in the best way it can, namely in the form of an amendment which I shall propose in a moment—an amendment to the motion to go into committee of supply. Before doing so, however, may I remind Your Honour that this subject, dealing as it does specifically with the question of amending the Old Age Pensions Act, which is now on the statute books, comes clearly within the provisions of citation 345 in Beauchesne's third edition. It is not any one of the matters the discussion of which that citation prohibits. Also, Mr. Speaker, I would draw your attention to Speakers' rulings found at pages 699 and 799 of Beauchesne's third edition, which make it clear that on a motion to go into supply wide latitude is to be allowed. One Speaker, as reported on page 799, makes the statement that any reasonable grievance could not be considered as irrelevant. There is no question about this being a reasonable grievance; it is a very serious grievance in the minds of a great many people.

**Mr. Martin:** What was the ruling or citation?

**Mr. Knowles:** The basic citation is 345 in the third edition; if the minister is looking at the second edition, it is citation 488.

**Mr. Martin:** How can the hon. member tell that?

**Mr. Knowles:** The Speakers' rulings that I refer to are found in the third edition—they are not in the little second edition which the minister has in his hand—at pages 699 and 799.