

finer, legal fees, and so on. By a policy of coöperation between the Dominion and the provinces this great variety of revenue will be made available for the administration of the system, and taxation will be spread over as wide a field as possible. It will hit both rich and poor; it will hit the landowner as well as the tenant; it will hit the industrialist as well as the farmer. That is one great advantage which I see in this form of coöperation between the provinces and the Dominion.

Personally I should like to see the pensions increased, just as I should like to see the age limit reduced. But the state of the national purse must be considered. We are embarking for the first time upon a scheme of social legislation. Does anyone imagine for a moment that we shall not hear of further legislation for social purposes in the future? We shall have to consider in the very near future such schemes as pensions for the blind, unemployment insurance, and so forth; we shall have to see to it that our returned soldiers are properly treated in the matter of pensions and reëstablishment; we shall have to see to it also that our civil servants are properly paid. All these things will require national expenditures and it would be unfair to the various classes of persons whom I have mentioned that we should go too far at the present stage in this particular class of social legislation, lest other social legislation in the future should be severely prejudiced.

Much has been said in the course of this debate about the proportion which the Dominion government should contribute to the cost of the scheme. I take this position with respect to that: if it should be necessary to increase the percentage of the federal contribution to this scheme in order to make old age pensions a success then that percentage will have to be increased, because the state of public opinion is such that old age pensions will be demanded and must be granted. Personally I should like to see a greater contribution made by the Dominion government.

May I refer to the suggestion made by the hon. member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. McPherson)? I think he was the first person to allude to the matter in the course of this debate. He pointed out that under this proposed scheme the cost of administering the system would be charged to the provinces, and in view of that fact it would be only reasonable that the Dominion should pay a little more than fifty per cent as suggested in the present bill. But we are face to face with this very important consideration: I do not myself think that it is as important what

percentage is contributed by the Dominion to the provinces, as that the legislation should pass. After all we must recognize that the cost of this legislation must be paid by the taxpayers of Canada, and it makes very little difference to them whether they pay it in one form of taxation to the province or in another form of taxation to the Dominion; if it should be necessary to increase the proportion of the federal contribution to the provinces, then that proportion must be increased. But we are face to face again with actual facts. A certain part of the Conservative party which was not concerned with elections did object to and did oppose the old age pensions bill. They opposed it not on the ground of principle but on the ground of cost, and I think it essential that we should now enact legislation that obtained the approval of the people of Canada in the last election, and that has some hope of passing both houses of parliament. I am therefore in favour of this proposal if the government does not, in view of the state of the national finances, deem it advisable to increase the federal contribution. I think it essential first and foremost that we should now enact legislation that will be sure to pass both houses of parliament.

Mr. ARTHURS: This debate, so far as I have heard the matter debated, was free from any political bias at all, until the Minister of Health introduced it to-night. He was the first man I think to bring the political factor into this discussion, and he was followed by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Thorson).

May I point out to the Minister of Labour a few facts, at least I deem them to be such. The minister says that if this bill is passed we can change it at any time we please. He admits that it is not perfect, and he admits that it is not along the line of the legislation passed by Australia. In the first place it is not along the lines of the Australian legislation because their legislation is purely federal. In the second place their legislation takes care of the sick and the blind. In the third place their age limit is much lower than ours, and their legislation generally is more effective than these proposals can possibly be. The minister will admit that, I think. On the other hand the minister says that if this bill passes we can change the legislation from time to time as we choose. In reply to that I call his attention to clause 4 wherein it is declared that if we enter into an agreement with the provinces there can be no change for ten years. What do my hon. friends think about that? The act is binding upon a province for ten years after its acceptance.