

*Social Security*

Nearly everyone in the province of Quebec is aware now of the resolution moved by the hon. member. It has indeed received well deserved publicity. The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should during the present session take into consideration the advisability of including in their social security program a system of allowances to every person without any sufficient income or means of support, who, by reason of an injury, accident, congenital infirmity or incurable disease, is at a disadvantage in seeking or obtaining employment, or incapable of providing for his subsistence, and whose age prevents him from benefiting by the social security legislation now in force.

All members who were elected in the last few years certainly have received applications for assistance from invalid or disabled persons from their own or some other counties. Those were of course extremely sad cases they would have liked to help. Unfortunately, they can only answer that there is no legislation allowing the federal government to deal with such cases.

Every member naturally passes those requests on to the government. Everyone submits such requests to the minister in order to emphasize to him the unanimous desire of charitable societies and associations for the blind to receive greater assistance for their charges.

It is encouraging to note that the present government is looking into these matters with sympathy. We are happy to recall that the father of social legislation in Canada—and this can be said without fear of contradiction—is none other than the former leader of the Liberal party, the late prime minister, Mr. William Lyon Mackenzie King. Many days have passed since that great humanitarian, that great economist, who became a great statesman, wrote, in 1909 I believe, a book entitled "Industry and Humanity." In it he outlined a program of social legislation an important part of which can now be found in our statute books. In fact a former Liberal government introduced the first social legislation years ago and the Liberal administration has been fulfilling that program to this day as is evidenced by unemployment insurance, old age pensions, pensions for the blind and family allowances.

Among other incidents, I remember one which took place some twenty years ago when old age pensions had been brought in in the province of Quebec. An old chap came to my house one day and asked to speak to me privately. I ushered him into my office and he told me, in his own words, that he

wished to show me a few bits of paper he had received in order to find out whether they were of any value. These slips of paper happened to be two old age pension cheques. He could hardly believe his own eyes. This man who, after a full, active and useful life, was unable to look after his own needs, received his old age pension.

Well, in my opinion, we have been enjoying for many years the social services which were inaugurated by the present administration; we are proud of the government and we know it will continue its good work. In the resolution introduced today, the hon. member from Terrebonne expresses the feelings of the whole population with regard to those unfortunate people, and he will evidently receive the support of everyone in this house.

We have reason, however, to ask ourselves whether this is the proper time, when we are faced with an emergency, when we have to meet extraordinary expenditures which many, even among our opponents, look upon as exorbitant.

We may justifiably ask ourselves whether the time has really come to adopt such legislation, since there is a desire to grant a pension to elderly people of seventy or more, without a means test. That is the proposal which was submitted to the provinces by the federal government as early as 1945. There is another proposal, which, if implemented, would have us give old age pensions at 65. We all remember that in 1945, the federal government offered the provinces to pay one hundred per cent of the costs of pensions for people over seventy, and half the cost of pensions to people aged sixty-five. That was six years ago and unfortunately we have made no progress since. We hope that, with the co-operation of the provinces, we may soon be able to give a pension to those of our people who are sixty-five.

But there are also the disabled persons, who have a claim upon our immediate attention.

Here I want to speak in praise of the present Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin). I believe that often, in the face of many requests that are submitted to the government, we forget what has been done by the young, active and tenacious Minister of National Health and Welfare. I am glad to see him in his seat at this time. After listening to the speeches made this afternoon, I feel sure he will give particular attention to this request, which seems to meet with general approval, and that he will submit a bill on this matter as soon as possible.