

ago a man who could handle a team could do agricultural work. An older man could manage that. But to-day he would have to be able to handle a tractor and many other kinds of machinery. If he had not learned to handle these in his youth it would be beyond his capacity to do it at an advanced age. The ordinary farmer would not dare to trust the older man with those machines. Elderly people are simply not wanted in industry, which means that no matter how earnestly they try, they are unable to supplement their income. It practically means that people from sixty to seventy years of age are condemned to starvation unless some one gives them charity. It is a serious matter.

Another thing, sixty years ago the ordinary old person could have a cow or two and produce milk and butter and be sure of a market. To-day there is no certainty of a market. This makes it much more difficult for elderly people to carry on.

The pensionable age should be reduced at least to sixty-five and as soon as possible to sixty. The dominion government neglected to do what it should have done when it did not come to the assistance of Alberta and British Columbia in their efforts to increase the old age pension. What has actually occurred is that these two provinces have been obliged to resort to increased taxation on their people in order to raise money for the old age pension. And this at a time when more than at any other time in the history of this country the dominion government has been obtruding into provincial taxation fields and rendering it more and more difficult for the provinces, except during war time, to raise enough revenue to carry on their ordinary affairs.

It has been said that this is a provincial matter. I challenge that statement. It is a dominion matter, whether the constitution says so or not. The minister does not need to be so nervous about infringing on provincial rights. He showed no nervousness when it came to taking away their money. He showed no nervousness when it came to managing the prices of the country and anything else that it suited his purpose to manage. He is not going to be endangering the British North America Act by offering money to the provinces with which to increase their allowance to elderly people. We have heard too much of this plausible, deceptive, specious talk about matters being provincial matters and therefore untouchable by the dominion.

One very important reason why the dominion should enter this field is that the provinces

differ widely in the matter of wealth. I believe Ontario is the richest province in the dominion; British Columbia comes next, and Alberta probably third. Some of the maritime provinces are not nearly so blessed with resources and means of raising money as other parts of the dominion. To expect a province like Prince Edward Island to pay out of its own revenues an old age pension as great as Ontario could pay is expecting something which is financially, and probably physically, absurd. The only way in which conditions can be equalized among the various provinces is through dominion government intervention, by grants which will enable the various provinces to pay the same rate. Surely a man who has fought life's battle up to the age of seventy in Prince Edward Island is entitled to as good an income as the man who has fought those battles in British Columbia. Why should he be deprived of equal advantage merely because he has done his work where the sun rises instead of where it sets?

I do not wish to prolong this discussion, but I do raise my voice in defence of a higher pension for old age. It should be \$30 a month at least in these times; and the age at which the pension becomes payable should be lower—sixty-five at least, and as soon as possible, sixty.

Mr. O'NEILL: I do not intend to delay the committee with any extended remarks, but I concur in everything that has been said with respect to increasing the old age pension. It must be apparent to everyone, because the government's figures show it, that the cost of living has gone up 15 per cent. Definitely, then, the old people have been subjected to a reduction of 15 per cent in their pension. If anyone in this country should get the cost-of-living bonus it is the old people. The way we treat them is disgraceful for a country as wealthy as Canada. There is no justification for it. I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Vancouver East upon the very able way in which he presented the case this morning for the old people.

The house is doing its utmost to finish its business by to-night. We have some \$400,000,000 of estimates to deal with. No proper consideration can be given to them. It goes "Item so-and-so—carried". The item is not even read. It is apparent to everyone that what should be done is to have these estimates examined carefully by a committee. And another thing that developed here this morning is with respect to private members'