

better than others could, however good their eyesight. I have been blind for 62 years. I lost my sight as a little boy of 15. I was educated at two of the large schools in England, and trained as an organist. I came to Canada but could not get a job, so I had to go into the piano business. For the last thirty years I have been in the work for the blind, and I think we have made great progress. I wanted to tell you this so that you would have confidence, Mr. Chairman, in what I am speaking to you about; and that you would know that I knew this. I just know them, I have known the blind at their work, I have visited the blind in their homes, in wretched homes; I have travelled from the Atlantic to the Pacific, visited every part of the Canada; I have received letters, sad, heart-breaking letters; and so particularly I know what I am talking about.

A petition was presented to Parliament in November, 1933. It was a very representative and very important petition. We did not make any suggestions to the government about the age limit, or about any amounts of payment. Very naturally there was a difference of opinion among the blind themselves, and we thought we would get rid of a great difficulty by leaving it to Parliament to settle that question, as that is all tied up with what has been done for the blind in other nations and in other parliaments.

The pioneer work for pensions has been going on for about nine years. We met Mr. Bennett. We met Mr. King. We were all received courteously and kindly. We also met various cabinet ministers and many members; and we are very encouraged with what has taken place. And now I want, Mr. Chairman, publicly to thank Dr. Cotnam for his resolution. I thank him on behalf of the blind people. He little knows the good he has done, and how he had bucked-up some of those blind people badly in need of bucking-up. They have lived in dinginess and poverty; some of them for 70 years. When Dr. Cotnam introduced this resolution it made quite a sensation and created quite an interest, and particularly it has received support throughout Canada. I want to thank you gentlemen here who supported that. I had all your speeches read to me, and I think it was wonderful to realize there was not one that argued against the blind getting pensions. The papers took it up—the Star, the Montreal Gazette, and La Presse, all had articles and editorials claiming the blind should have state aids similar to what they are giving in other countries. These papers and papers all through the country took the matter up—I have had papers sent to me from all parts of Canada, some came to me from Vancouver yesterday.

This resolution of Dr. Cotnam's and the support it got has been a wonderful thing for the blind. It has bucked them up. It has brought hope into their lives. We have been talking about pensions for years. I receive many letters from blind people and I might tell you that some of them imagine they have almost got their pensions now. They just imagine they can feel the dollar bill. I had to write and tell them that there is a long way for us to go yet. They have been asking innumerable questions, whether the money will come to them in the form of dollar bills, or whether it will come in the form of a cheque, and so forth.

Now Mr. Chairman, I want to speak on the needs of the blind. When a man loses his eyesight it is the beginning of his losing many other things. It is the beginning of his losses. If he had a little money saved up, then the money all goes in a trip to New York to consult the specialist, or in going about the country trying to get his eyesight back; and then when the money is gone, the home goes, he loses his home. His children are put into an orphan asylum. It is truly a sad condition. He fights it as long as he can. He tries in every way to help himself; but like a bird with a broken wing, at last he gives up, and when a man gives up it is a pretty serious thing. He loses his health, both mental and physical. Insanity sometimes sets in, then suicide. I have known quite a number of people to commit suicide because of their blindness. You