

Disabled Persons Act

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder if I could ask the Prime Minister if he would read the second article.

Mr. Diefenbaker: If the hon. gentleman wishes to put that one on the record today, he may do so. I have here only the first one.

An hon. Member: Purposely.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I will not read the heading of it. The hon. gentleman knows what the heading is. Out of consideration I would not read it.

I have dealt in general with the policy of social security and the degree to which we have made increases. When I listened to the hon. member for Essex East the other evening speaking of the ills of making promises in social security that could not be carried out, and the evils of them, I wondered how he must have felt when he first heard of this latest policy enunciated by the Liberal party. As a matter of fact, I note they say that there should not really be any increases now, or any direct increases, but rather there should be an over-all plan with an increase only for the purpose of arriving at a basic level.

I have here a report of the proceedings of the final meeting of the policy committee at the national Liberal rally. Under social security it states as follows:

In the provision of pensions, we are far from being at the end of the road of achievement. The pensions presently available to many older persons are inadequate. This deficiency can be remedied either by a direct increase in monthly payments under the present old age security system or by a new contributory scheme, if this can be worked out with the approval of the provinces and on a sound actuarial basis.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That was the declaration on April 8, 1961. But does anyone over there on the opposite side of the chamber suggest that the promise of up to \$400 a month for a married couple can be brought into effect without taxation? Does anybody say that it can be brought into effect by the present formula of 3-3-3?

Mr. Pearson: Of course not.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The report states that they will do it either in that way or by a new contributory scheme that will be worked out with the approval of the provinces. We believe that the entire social security system can be maintained as it is today and that over and above that plans—including blind pensions, pensions for the retarded, the crippled and all the other varieties—can be brought into being by legislation which will require the consent of the provinces.

When we speak of a constitutional amendment being necessary, the opposition say there is no reason for it. The opinion we received was that there is such a need. We waited. We thought we were going to bring about in Canada the repatriation of our constitution. We had hopes of doing so up until a few months ago. It is now apparent that our hopes in that regard cannot be achieved. Because of that fact we intend to bring before the house the necessary address provided we can secure the co-operation of the provinces. Today the opposition say that co-operation is not needed, yet here is what they said in the declaration of April 8:

—or by a new contributory scheme, if this can be worked out with the approval of the provinces and on a sound actuarial basis.

In other words what they recognized in April they denied in February. We stated exactly where we stood throughout the entire period, namely that it was necessary to have a constitutional amendment. Already we have been in communication with the provinces. We have stated that we would not in any way interfere with the provinces, but that this amendment is necessary if we are to bring into effect a contributory system, not only for the aged but also providing survivor benefits and bringing into line the various private company schemes to the end that we shall build in this country a security scheme and plan that will be beneficial to all the people. While up to the present moment one or more of the provinces have indicated that they will not join in this unless we give them particulars of the plan in detail, I hope there will be a change in this view. I hope we will not be held up, and that at this session we will be able to introduce the address. Then, properly founded and accepting the premise in the declaration on April 8 last by the Liberal party that consent and co-operation by the provinces are necessary, we will be able to achieve a measure of security over and above the present system that will maintain reasonable opportunities for all in our country especially for the many today who, because of illness, infirmity and the like, are unable to take their equal place in the battle of life.

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition gave us the genesis of welfare legislation, and it seems to me that the Prime Minister has, in biblical terms, given us the revelation. We are out of biblical order, but it seems to me that this is all a prelude to the exodus, and I do not intend to join in with lamentations of any kind.

Our group is ready to support this legislation, as it has been in the case of most of the measures that have been brought forward.