

an income, including his pension, of \$1,200 a year; whereas, under the Old Age Assistance Act and under the Disabled Persons Act, he can have an income, including pension, of \$960 a year.

A married couple, under the Blind Persons Act, if one person is blind—the applicant—and his wife is sighted—can receive an income of \$1,980 a year; whereas under the Disabled Persons Act and under the Old Age Assistance Act a couple, of whom one is disabled, can receive an income of \$1,620 a year.

By comparing those figures, you will see that a single blind person and a married blind couple are given more generous treatment under what we call the income ceiling provision than is the aged person between the ages of 65 and 70, or the disabled person.

Mr. CATHERS: What is your opinion? Why should they not be on a similar basis?

Mr. MONTEITH (*Perth*): I will go back to when these programs were instituted, and ask Dr. Davidson to give you the thinking as of that time.

I would like to point out that since that time, or at any time there has been an amendment to the act, these ceilings have been increased proportionately. I think Dr. Davidson is quite familiar with the thinking that was behind the original setting of the ceiling.

Dr. DAVIDSON: Mr. Chairman, in the first place, the first piece of legislation that came into existence was the original Old Age Pensions Act of 1927. To that, in 1937, was added a provision with respect to blind persons.

When that provision with respect to blind persons was added, it was then decided that the income ceiling for blind persons should be somewhat more generous than the income ceiling for old age pensioners as of that date, who had their sight, but who were not able to remain on the labour market.

Mr. HALPENNY: Was there a means test?

Dr. DAVIDSON: There was a means test at that time.

Mr. HALPENNY: For the old age pension?

Dr. DAVIDSON: Yes; and this was part of the total program, and enabled a blind person at 40 years of age to receive, literally and legally, an old age pension at the age of 40, because of his blindness.

It was at this time that the principle was established in the legislation that the means test for blind persons should be more generous than the means test for sighted persons.

Then, when we came to 1951, and had a major reorganization of all the legislation for these groups of people, we had the Old Age Security Act, and parliament passed a new Blind Persons Act, and a new Old Age Assistance Act for those between 65 and 70 years. Again, in the Old Age Assistance Act of 1951 and the Blind Persons Act of 1951 there were, income ceilings which were more generous in respect of blind persons than they were in respect of sighted persons.

Mr. HALPENNY: Still with a means test?

Dr. DAVIDSON: Yes; but there was an increase in the means test at that time, and the pension was substantially greater in dollar terms than it had been originally.

Then we come to 1954; and when the Disabled Persons Act was passed by parliament in 1954 a decision had to be made as to whether the sighted disabled persons who would benefit from the provisions of the Disabled Persons Act would be given the more generous income ceilings that were provided for the blind persons, under the Blind Persons Act, or the slightly less generous income ceilings provided under the Old Age Assistance Act.