

The Address—Mr. Zaplitny

the smoke screen clears away, this house will drop that subject and get on with its real business.

If we are to find national unity the real business before the house is to see that this parliament—this may be the last session of the present parliament and therefore there is a greater sense of urgency than ever—should do for the people of Canada those things which they expect will be done. What are some of those things?

First, ever since the election of 1945 the people of Canada have been led to believe that the government had plans for an overall social security system. It has been called by various names, but what it boils down to is that the government, along with other parties in and outside of the house, promised the people that they would amend the Old Age Pensions Act in a way to provide that the means test would be abolished and the age limit lowered to 65 years—in some cases it was promised that it would be lowered to 60 years, but we will be happy if it is brought down to 65 years as the first instalment—and the amount of pension raised in order to bring it into line with present costs of living, which would require approximately \$50 per month.

We in this group have urged that in the form of resolutions and motions ever since this parliament commenced. We have not been successful in obtaining a majority vote on that subject. We invite other parties in the house to join our pleas to the government that they do not let this opportunity go by without bringing into being these things that I have mentioned and which were promised, in good faith I believe, and accepted in good faith at election time.

We also need legislation to provide similar assistance to all persons who are crippled or disabled in some way. The other evening the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mrs. Strum) made an excellent plea, with which the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) agreed, on behalf of persons suffering from arthritis and similar disabilities. We know from personal experience that in every community in Canada there are people who are not old enough to qualify for an old age pension, people in their forties and fifties, who are hopelessly disabled from some form of rheumatism or other disease and who must depend in most cases solely on municipal aid.

There is no legislation to provide this aid so far as the dominion is concerned. In most provinces there is no provincial legislation to provide this assistance for crippled persons, and I know this is so with regard to Manitoba with the exception of those who

live in unorganized territories. In all other cases they are a drain upon the municipality.

Those who are close to municipal affairs know that municipalities, particularly rural municipalities, are having their hands full trying to provide education, build roads, repair bridges and so on and simply cannot provide the assistance required by these unfortunate victims of disease. Therefore we need legislation at the federal level to provide for disabled persons of this country on the same basis as we provide for old age pensioners. That is something that is urgent and could be done at this session of parliament. There is no reason why it could not be done.

We hear a lot about the huge surpluses that are being built up—later on I shall refer to one reason for that—and there certainly is no argument that we cannot get to work and pass the necessary legislation in order to show that we made those promises in good faith and are prepared to carry them out.

The speech from the throne makes a reference to the extension of the scope of the Family Allowances Act. We have no way of knowing just what that will mean when it gets to the stage of legislation. However, I hope that it will include at least two extensions.

The first should be in connection with students who are over the prescribed age for family allowances and who are still attending school. In many cases parents are trying to give children higher education but at a considerable sacrifice to their own standard of living. The payment of family allowances would be of great assistance to those people who are sincerely trying to educate their children.

Another way in which they should be extended is in connection with immigrants arriving in the country. At the present time the act does not permit the payment of allowances to the children of immigrants until they have been here three years. I made a plea on that point last June and if I remember correctly the minister said that consideration would be given to it. I do not know whether he has that in mind but it seems to me that if we look at the thing from a logical standpoint we will realize that these immigrants, regardless of whence they come, have not great resources. They are coming here to try to make a living out of the great wealth of our natural resources. They are prepared to work hard but during the first three years of their life in Canada they require the assistance that could be given in the way of family allowances much more so than ten or fifteen years hence. It would seem the better part of wisdom to extend the act to cover the children of these people.