

Canada Pension Plan

Canadians on old age security at a lesser rate who shall have to continue for the rest of their lives on that rate is not one that will stand up in our Canadian society or in our Canadian economy.

We then moved a motion in committee, as he suggested, which appears at page 2057 of the committee report and reads as follows:

The committee also recommends that consideration be given to the amending of part IV of Bill C-136 to provide for an increase in the pension paid under the Old Age Security Act to \$100 a month and for the lowering of the eligible age for the full pension under the Old Age Security Act to age 65.

That motion was defeated 19 to 2 with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and myself being the only ones voting in favour of it. All the Conservative and Liberal members voted against it.

Following that we moved another motion which also appears at page 2057 of the report and which is as follows:

The committee also recommends that consideration be given to the amending of part IV of Bill C-136 to provide for an increase in the amount of the pension paid under the Old Age Security Act and for the progressive lowering of the eligible age for a full pension under the Old Age Security Act to age 65.

That motion was defeated 15 to 6, but in this case the Conservative members of the committee voted with us.

I suggest that between that date, which was February 8, and the date the Prime Minister made his statement in the house, which was February 17, some very quick political decisions were made, and this probably proves that this can be done when it has to be done. It would seem that all the months of actuarial work were disregarded in making the decisions in respect of this bill, because the government was worried about the political effects of the figures which had been presented to it earlier.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, let me say that we are pleased with this change because, after all, it is results that count.

The implementation of the Canada pension plan and the improvement to old age security by progressive lowering of the age will not solve all the problems in connection with old age security. We will still have a large number of people in this country who will not be covered by the Canada pension plan, or who will receive very little from it, and others who will not have private pension plans to implement their income. We have been providing to some extent for these people during the past few years under the Old Age Assistance Act—that is, persons between ages 65 and 69 under an agreement

[Mr. Prittie.]

between the federal government and the provincial governments.

As old age security becomes available to individuals down to age 65 the cost to the federal government under the old age assistance program will be reduced, as will the costs to the provinces be reduced. I think we will then have to look at that group below age 65. I suggest this is not a problem which will come to light in the future, but one that is in existence now.

Before my election to this house I was a member of a municipal council, and as such had to deal with matters of social welfare. I still receive calls from individuals in this regard. There is quite a large group of individuals between ages 55 and 65 who are in rather difficult circumstances. This is particularly so in respect of individuals over the age of 60, but who have not reached the age of 65. Until such time as they reach age 65 there is only one source of help available to them, and that is the usual city or municipal social welfare assistance. Many people are reluctant to apply for social welfare, although perhaps they should not be, because they have contributed by way of taxes to the cost of social welfare during their earning years. Many individuals still feel that this is something they do not want. These people do not have quite the same objection to accepting old age assistance. They seem to make a distinction between the two in their minds, and it does not hurt their pride nearly as much to apply for old age assistance as it does to apply for social welfare.

I am aware of the existence of many individuals between the ages of 60 and 65 who need help, but at the present time social welfare is the only help available to them. I think we should look at this situation and change the terms of old age assistance in order to assist this group of people. This suggestion is not new, but has been made on previous occasions.

I have here an advertisement that appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* of Thursday, April 4, 1963 under the heading of "The Liberal Policy—General Election—1963". It outlines the standing of the Liberal party in respect of the whole field of pensions. I should like to quote one part of this advertisement which deals with the portability of pension plans, about which we have been talking here:

Make the \$75 old age assistance available to single women and widows at age 60.