

Pensions Act

of the provinces wanted an even later effective date to be set. But she must know that prior to the calling of that conference some of the provinces were already asking for these increases to be made possible at an earlier date, and I suggest a responsibility lay upon her and upon the federal government months ago to discuss with the provinces the possibility of these increases so that the earliest possible effective date might have been arranged.

I know the minister will tell us that she and the government had a different perspective, a somewhat different scheme affecting these matters in relation to the Canada pension plan. I remember what she said in her speech on July 18 about these various plans. But I suggest that she and the government should have realized, shortly after they took office, that the question of raising the basic old age security pension to \$75 a month was a pressing one, that it was a commitment that would have to be kept, and once that was done these other increases would have to be made.

The government, in our view, should have consulted the provinces at an earlier date, so we would not be in this position now of having had the old age security at \$75 per month effective in October, whereas the \$75 under these three programs is effective only in December. We deplore this delay just as much as the previous speaker did. We feel that the government cannot excuse itself for its delay in this matter by the kind of statement the minister made with regard to what was said at the recent federal-provincial conference.

We have no quarrel with the fact that these three measures are presented to us in one package. As a matter of fact, although in the past each time any one of these programs has been improved it has been done by a separate bill amending the original act, there is something to be said for looking at these programs at one and the same time. I hope that the day will soon come when we will look at our social security needs, our social security programs in this country on an over-all basis. This is something I want to elaborate upon for just a moment or two at this point.

I think one of the misfortunes that arises from the way in which these increases have been dealt with in this latter part of 1963 is the fact that we have come at these things on a piecemeal basis, and therefore have denied to the provinces, denied to the country as a whole, a chance to consider all of our social security and social welfare needs. We increased the old age security pension, as we simply had to do. Having done that, we now have to increase these related pensions and

allowances. Our action in increasing the permissible rates at the federal level makes it necessary for the provinces to contribute their shares. This affects the provinces in terms of their approach to other social and welfare measures.

The minister, in her speech on July 18 when she introduced the Canada pension plan, referred to some of these problems. She referred to the problem of widows with dependant children, the problem of disabled persons who are not now covered, and so on. There is also the question of survivor benefits. There is the whole question of sickness benefits and whether they should be attached to unemployment insurance or to health insurance. There are all these other needs to meet which will be delayed just a bit longer because we have come at this present problem on a piecemeal basis.

In the view of this party, the day cannot come too soon for a federal-provincial conference, such as is necessary, and for bringing in the social workers and those who are experts in this field, to try to devise an over-all program that meets all of our needs. We support wholeheartedly—indeed we have been asking for it—this increase to \$75 a month in these three programs, along with old age security. But we think it is a sad state of affairs that there are still no survivor benefits in this country; that there are no provisions for pensions for orphans or for widows with dependant children, and the various other categories to which the minister has referred, and to which I have referred in my remarks today.

There are many people who are facing up to these problems. Experts in the various departments of health and welfare at the federal and provincial level, as we all know, have done a great deal of work and a great deal of study on this matter. Our schools of social work in various universities are working on this matter. The Canadian welfare council and other Canadian social and welfare agencies are all aware of the growing-like-Topsy nature of our social security system. I do not want to suggest by the use of that phrase that it has not some elements in it that are very sound. I think we have made pretty good progress in some parts of the field. I think the establishment of the principle of universality for old age security and at the family allowance level is something good, something of which Canada can be proud. Then, the fact that we have developed these other shared programs is to the credit of this country.

I think, perhaps, that it is good we have not yet laid down lines that are hard and fast. We have not adopted any rigid position which would make it impossible for us to move into new ways of dealing with these things.