

reasons as well, but the main one is that the provinces are primarily those who pay old age pensions and our agreements with the provinces are based upon the age of seventy. It would be necessary to get the provinces to agree to a lowering of the age, which would in turn throw a heavier financial burden upon the provinces if the present plan of division of expenses were continued. All factors considered, it was not felt that the government could comply with the prayer of the petition this year.

Mr. BLACKMORE: I appreciate the way in which the minister has dealt with the matter, and I grant that probably, as we see matters at the present time, that is completely satisfactory; but just the same we have not taken care of people between the ages of sixty and seventy. With respect to the Department of Labour, I said a little while ago that there was no way in which a man of sixty could get a job, and I do not believe that one could find a firm from one end of Canada to the other who would take on a woman of sixty. If they cannot get work at sixty and cannot sell what they are able to produce, then they are in danger of starvation or of the greatest privation, and their only recourse is to go on relief. But we are cutting down relief all over the country. Look at the condition that these people will be in between the ages of sixty and seventy. It was consideration for this large group that prompted me to make the statement I did with respect to the civil service regulations. I am not making a suggestion to the minister, but I wonder if he could not work out with his colleague a plan whereby we could arrange for people of sixty or seventy to get work. A good many people will suffer terribly unless some measures are taken to help them, because they cannot help themselves. If the civil service will not take a man who is perfectly sound at sixty, how can one expect anyone else in the dominion to take him? We know that industry demands that a man shall be under forty-five years of age. Under these circumstances, if we do not make provision to bring the old age pension age down to sixty, we are practically condemning to shameful privation people between the ages of sixty and seventy. I merely wanted to point this out. I know the ministers are burdened with trials and anxieties, so much so that I marvel that they can keep their poise. But there is this difficulty which must be faced; otherwise the suffering will be a disgrace to the country and to all governments in power.

Mr. McCANN: I have always entertained the principle that pensions of any type should be on a contributory basis; and in view of the

[Mr. Ilesley.]

fact that this house has passed an Unemployment Insurance Act on that basis, I wonder if the government has considered the proposal, which was put to the house at former sessions, of establishing a system of old age pensions on a contributory basis. All people at some time in their lives have some earning capacity. A good many people will not save a dollar of their own volition; and if they could be induced to put by a few dollars during their earning years, the government contributing in a like manner, then when they came to the age of sixty or sixty-five or seventy, a fund would have been built up whereby they could be given an old age pension. In my judgment, until that time comes, when there is some type of contributory pension fund for aged people, we are not going to be in a position financially to pay pensions to people under seventy years of age. The late Minister of Finance, Mr. Dunning, in discussing old age pensions, took kindly to the suggestion in that regard. These matters should not be dropped. They should be kept alive from year to year, and the sooner the government adopts as a part of its policy the building up of a contributory system of old age pensions, the sooner we shall have a solution of a pressing problem.

Mr. ILSLEY: Everyone admits the desirability of establishing a system of contributory rather than non-contributory old age pensions if possible. The difficulties heretofore have been largely constitutional, and it was hoped, I think, that this would be one of the questions which would have been considered in connection with the Sirois report. A certain reallocation of powers will be necessary before a workable scheme can be adopted with regard to contributory old age pensions. If that were adopted, it might be possible to lower the age.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I express one hope in connection with what the hon. gentleman has been discussing. I trust the day will come when we shall have a social insurance plan broad enough to include old age, unemployment, invalidity, accident, health, all in one contributory scheme, whereby all those who contribute will be assisted in their efforts by the state and will be able to draw from a fund for any one of these purposes.

Mr. McCANN: That will be utopia.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am not so sure that it is so remote. I hope the day will come, for it is something everyone will be pleased to have.