

Under this plan the provinces, which certainly have exclusive jurisdiction in the matter of help to the poor and needy, will determine the amount needed to meet the cost of living in each province. This assistance will be available whether persons receive Old Age Security or not, whether they are young or old, whether sick or disabled—the only criteria will be the one of need, and the federal Government will share the cost of the contribution each province makes to its needy.

In this way, no pension will be paid to those who do not need it, as exists at the present time. However, every cent available will be paid to people who do need it, whether they receive the Old Age Security pension or not. If a province decides that the minimum that is needed in certain areas is \$100 a month, and proposes to the federal Government that \$100 a month pension shall be paid, then the federal Government will share the cost with the province, whether the \$100 goes to a person of 65 or 70 years of age or more, or whether the person is disabled, or is only 20 years of age.

The second proposal which will assist senior citizens is medicare. When in effect—and the target date is July 1, 1967—it will relieve all pensioners of a major expense. Indeed, it will assist all Canadians in a most important area, that of developing and maintaining a high standard of national health.

Honourable senators, that is the framework within which Mr. Pearson's Government proposes to make additional assistance available to retired persons. It features an approach which is flexible and capable of providing effectively the additional assistance required.

In discussing this topic there is one other observation I would make. We in the Senate will shortly be in a position to examine this problem in a comprehensive fashion. I refer to the fact that the Special Committee on Aging, which has been studying this question, will very shortly be making its report. I know we all look forward to receiving its findings on this important topic.

Honourable senators, we are just beginning work in a new Parliament on the eve of the centenary of Confederation. When our forefathers decided to create a new independent country on the northern half of this great continent, they took upon themselves a heroic and difficult responsibility.

They had to strike a delicate political balance between the various regions of the country and between the two founding races. They found this balance in the establishment of a federal state and their creation has endured for almost 100 years. Indeed it has more than endured. It has flourished, and Canada has made the transition from a small agricultural community to a modern industrial state. Moreover, it has done this in a way that has served to strengthen national unity.

To the statesmen of Confederation and to their successors is due much of the credit for our progress. I say this in a very deliberate way, because Confederation itself was the product of a conscious political decision. The establishment of an independent nation was only one of the alternatives facing Canada in the period 1864 to 1867. But it was this alternative that commanded the sympathy and the enthusiasm of the Fathers of Confederation. It may be, in fact I am sure it was, that the task the Fathers set themselves was more difficult than even they realized. But in their efforts and desire for a strong, independent and free Canada they never wavered.

I think of Macdonald, the first Prime Minister, whose great contribution it was to ensure that Canada truly had Dominion from sea to sea. Sir John pursued this goal with every power and ounce of strength at his command and he changed the destiny of a continent in realizing his dream.

I think of Laurier, under whom the West was opened up to settlement and Canada's identification as an independent country advanced. And Laurier proved and did something else. He was the first Canadian prime minister of his race, and he proved for all time that his people are a fundamental part of the fabric that is Canada.

The successors of these men were also political statesmen of the first order. They each had a vision of a free, independent and strong Canada, and all of them conducted themselves to further this goal.

Honourable senators, the people and parliamentarians of the Canada of today are the heirs to a magnificent heritage, and it is good on the eve of our centennial to reflect on the legacy of our history. But how much better it is to resolve that we of this generation will be worthy of our history, that we will find within us the determination to go forward in peace and unity towards an even greater and more glorious second centennial.