

*Old Age Pensions*

Mr. McPHERSON: If the hon. gentleman is through I will now resume my discussion of the section under consideration. I am not particularly averse to an increase in the proportion the Dominion should pay, if that is at all possible, but I am opposed to the Dominion paying 100 per cent of the cost. It seems to me that the most satisfactory results could be obtained by means of legislation such as is now proposed, whereby the coöperation of the provinces can be secured. The provincial government is in closer touch with those for whom the legislation is designed than a central body under the Dominion government could possibly be. For that reason I am in favour of the provinces contributing to the expense of maintaining the pensions administration. As to the amount that shall be paid, if more could be done along that line than we are able to do I should be glad to see it done. But on the other hand if that cannot be done, I do not think there is much reason for worrying in so far as those provinces are concerned. It would be good politics and good business on the part of those provinces who have identified themselves with social welfare legislation to intimate at this stage that they would not take the matter of old age pensions up unless a larger percentage was paid by the Dominion. I submit that several of the local governments will take up old age pensions even if they are only placed on a fifty-fifty basis, but they would be much more gratified if the House would increase the federal percentage.

The hon. member for North Winnipeg (Mr. Heaps) says there is an absolute difference between paying fifty per cent of the cost of such a scheme and paying fifty per cent with the cost of operation added. But that could be met by the House increasing the percentage paid by the Dominion if it saw fit to do so.

As to the discussions with respect to this matter which took place during the last election, my opinion is that the public understood the question at issue was not the amount the Dominion or the provinces should pay but whether the federal House should pass this legislation and allow the provinces to come in under it, or whether they should wait until the several provinces agreed upon an old age pensions scheme which could then be adopted by the Dominion. I submit that the present plan of passing federal legislation and letting the provinces come under it one by one, if they feel so inclined is much speedier than the method of summoning the nine provinces together and getting them to agree upon anything. When we see how long it takes this House to agree upon even one section

[Mr. Kaiser.]

of this bill, you can form some idea of the task ahead of you when you seek to get nine provinces to agree upon any particular bill. I think it would be an almost impossible task. If any change is made in this section I submit it should take into consideration the cost to the provinces of administering this legislation.

Mr. NEILL: I will not imitate the actions of other gentlemen as to whom I have complained that they discussed the whole principle of the bill on one section, a thing they should not have done. But I have here an amendment, Mr. Chairman, upon which I should like to get your ruling. I think it is in order, but if not I must of course submit to your ruling. However, I think it will give effect to the evident desire of the labour members of the House and perhaps of some hon. gentlemen opposite as well. I should like to test the feeling of the House as to whether it is prepared to go to the extent of fixing a greater proportion than fifty per cent in our contribution to the provinces. The amendment recently proposed by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Ladner), and quite properly rejected, was rejected on the ground, the well known ground that it violated the rule which says that no private member shall introduce a bill or move an amendment to a bill which increases the public expenditure to any appreciable extent. It has been held that small expenditures involved, such as the payment of fees etc., would not be considered a violation of this well known rule, but the Chairman held that it was not in order for any hon. member to increase specifically the amount mentioned in this section. What I propose to do, however, is I think somewhat different. I propose to strike out the words "equal to one-half" in line 22, and insert the words "not exceeding seventy-five per cent." That will not be compulsory or mandatory at all, and cannot be held to increase the expenditure of the government because under such an arrangement they might give fifty per cent, seventy-five per cent or even forty per cent. As far as that goes I think the provinces would take care that it was not less than fifty per cent at least. The section would then read:

The governor in council may make an agreement with the lieutenant-governor in council of any province for the payment to such province quarterly of an amount not exceeding seventy-five per cent of the net sum paid out—

And so on. I think that would cover the point of order. We are not committing the government to an expenditure of seventy-