

Supply—Health and Welfare

\$28 billion of production this year and with vast potentialities for the production of food, clothing, shelter and practically everything else that Canadians ordinarily use, we should not be able to allow our senior citizens a sufficient amount of that production to give them the amount of money value called for in this set of figures.

I had pointed out the fact that although members of this committee had been talking about this matter of old age pensions for some time, mostly they had complained about the conditions which prevail but had not offered any solution whatsoever to the problem. Then I pointed out that the member for Fort William at a certain point, almost in indignation, I thought, rose and asked which one of the taxes, or something to that effect, we would suggest should be increased in order that we should obtain the money that is necessary to provide the senior citizens of Canada with the standard of living that I think everybody in this house realizes and agrees they should be able to have. I suggested that it would not be necessary to increase any taxes in order to provide the services and the goods which the elderly people need.

I mentioned the "made-beaver" which the Hudson's Bay Company used. These "made-beavers" were like coins. The largest one had a value of a mature beaver skin dressed. With these tokens, and the smaller ones made by dividing them into halves and quarters, the people in those days all through the west apparently took care of all their needs for the distribution of goods.

Then I referred to the scrip system which was employed in the stores in the towns near where I grew up as a boy in southern Alberta. I thought it might be interesting to give a little attention to that local scrip as probably embodying a germ out of which a method of distribution of goods to underprivileged could be developed without adding to the regular currency circulation of the country.

There were two stores in the little community of Cardston. At that time Cardston was a village of probably 350 people, with about 150 in the neighbourhood. One of the two stores in Cardston was H. S. Allan and Company, general merchants and store, and the other was the Cardston Co-operative Mercantile Company. Each of these employed a form of scrip.

Mr. Nicholson: What year was that?

Mr. Blackmore: I would imagine around 1896-7, and they continued to employ this scrip with considerable freedom until around 1905. The member for Peace River suggests that it was probably a little later, somewhere around 1910. Then it began to be rumoured

[Mr. Blackmore.]

that in using the scrip they were violating the currency laws of Canada. Consequently that was probably the main reason why the use of scrip gradually was discontinued, but there were merchants in Raymond, about 40 miles from Cardston, who employed scrip, I think, a little later than that.

What was the principle in scrip as used by, we shall say—

The Chairman: Order. May I with some regret break in at that point and state to the hon. member that we are not now discussing the principle of scrip? We are discussing the principle of devoting some \$2,600,000 to family allowances and old age security administration. I should appreciate it very much if the hon. member would devote his remarks to that subject.

Mr. Blackmore: Mr. Chairman, I should like to point out that technically you are entirely right but realistically you are entirely wrong. Yesterday we discussed old age pensions, and I think every member in this house would be fully agreed that we should double the old age pension. But everybody was agreed—I think including the minister—that the one thing we just could not get over was how to finance the increase. If, in discussing old age pensions, a member cannot discuss the methods of financing, we might just as well close this house up as far as finding a solution to the problem is concerned, and turn it into an afternoon social society, confessing immediately that we are just helpless and that there is no use. Why should people all over the country send a lot of people like us here to talk about problems which, even before we approach them, are admitted as being utterly unsolvable.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I might say this. I think we all appreciate the great care which the hon. gentleman has given to the study of this question of assistance to the aged citizens of our country. Last night I had an opportunity of discussing matters with him after he had intervened and I am more confirmed than ever of that interest. I appreciate his position in trying to find additional ways of obtaining resources to meet these obligations. However, I wonder if he would not agree that the chairman was perhaps on strong ground when he suggested that there was another place to discuss the means by which this very desirable objective could be met. I do not want to be unduly restrictive on the hon. gentleman but I think he will be assured of my belief in his interest in this subject, and I want to affirm that great concern. But there is not