

expected that some reduction would be made, which would have assisted a great deal. Since that was an interim report, I believed it would assist these old people at least to a degree until we were able to return here, and complete our investigation, and make more definite and detailed recommendations to the government. I feel that the social security committee has been let down in that regard.

Mr. MITCHELL: But the old people have not been let down.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Yes; they have definitely been let down. You might say that they have been given \$5 a month more, and that the dominion is contributing its portion. But the fact is that they were expecting more than that. I know the Minister of Labour does not consider \$25 a month is sufficient for these old people to live on. I believe he would be the last man to say that it is. I think I know him well enough for that. It is going to help, of course, but there are many elderly people in this country who cannot possibly get along on the amount they are receiving—and they are under the age of seventy. I have heard some hon. members discussing this matter, and saying that the age should be sixty-five years. I believe the experience of most hon. members is that the people who are in need of old age pensions are not people who during their lives have lived in comparative luxury, and have a potential span of life of probably eighty-five or ninety years. They are not the people who require this form of assistance. The people who require it are the ones who have worked hard during their lives and who, for some reason or another, have not been able to accumulate sufficient income to maintain them in their old age. When such people reach the age of seventy, they have long since passed the time when they can earn sufficient income to maintain themselves. When they reach the age of sixty they have reached an age when they are no longer capable of earning sufficient income to maintain a decent standard of living.

What will \$20 or \$25 a month buy? Well, one could not buy a suit of clothes with that amount of money. And if he is going to rent any kind of decent house, it would cost much more than that. One cannot get a room in Ottawa for less than \$20 or \$25 a month, and certainly one cannot get a room in Ottawa where he can do his own light housekeeping, or where these old people would be permitted to do their light housekeeping, for that amount of money.

When we look at this matter in a reasonable and sensible way we cannot possibly conceive

of members of the House of Commons permitting this legislation to stand as it is. I think \$1 a day is an insignificant amount, and the pension should be at least that much. I would also say that the age should be reduced to sixty years.

I should like to mention a few things said by the minister. I shall make my remarks as brief as possible, because the time is getting late—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): I hear some hon. members saying, "hear, hear". They will remember I am not averse to holding up the committee in discussing an important matter like this. Hon. members on the other side of the house have had a large share of the debate this evening. I have my notes right in front of me, and I do not wish to be aggravated to the point where I shall have to go on to say what I had had in mind I would say.

This is really an important question. A while ago the minister spoke about the constitutional aspect. He said that he was acting within the constitution, and that he could go only so far as the legislation and the constitution permitted him to go. But I would remind him that recently we made an appeal to the British government to amend the British North America Act so that we might do certain things with respect to elections. In a matter such as this the government might very well have included a request for the necessary permission to amend the British North America Act in a way which would permit us to take over complete, national control of old age pensions.

Hon. members may bring up all the constitutional difficulties they like. They may say, "Whatever we should have done we did not do." But there is nothing which would have prevented the minister at this time lowering the age limit, and reducing it from seventy to sixty. He could have done that quite nicely by order in council. He could have made it possible to increase the old age pension from \$20 to \$30 a month, and that would be little enough, without any amendment to the constitution.

But the most important point touched upon to-night in connection with old age pension is this: Where is the money to come from? I was surprised and amazed when the hon. member for Vancouver East said that the arguments in support of the old age pension, as far as the money problem was concerned, were all cockeyed. It may be so to him, but the fact is it is a most serious problem. That is the problem which the Minister of Finance has to face.