

Mr. ILSLEY: The foreign exchange control board.

Mr. COLDWELL: The popular opinion is that the banks get it.

Mr. ILSLEY: Less shipping charges on coinage. I may add that the foreign exchange control board has agents all over the country. Those agents are the chartered banks, and perhaps it would be misleading to say that the exchange control board gets one per cent. It does get it, but out of that it has to pay commission to its agents.

Mr. COLDWELL: The amount paid would be less than the amount collected.

Mr. ILSLEY: Oh, yes.

Mr. COLDWELL: That is the point.

Mr. ILSLEY: Yes, there is a profit on it.

Item agreed to.

51. Old age pensions, including pensions to the blind—administration, \$41,320.

Mr. MacNICOL: Has any table been prepared to show how much extra it would cost the country if the pensionable age were reduced from 70 to 65 and the allowance increased from \$20 to \$30?

Mr. ILSLEY: I have not that information here, but it was given in a return moved for some time ago.

Mr. MacNICOL: I know it was, but I should like to see it on *Hansard*.

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): Some time ago the minister said that the question of increasing old age pensions was a provincial matter. Have any of the other provinces signified their willingness to increase their proportion so that the dominion might do likewise in order to give the pensioner a little more than he gets now?

Mr. ILSLEY: British Columbia and Alberta are themselves supplementing old age pensions payable to pensioners in those provinces.

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): I understood the minister to say that the dominion government could not do anything about it, but that if the provinces raised their proportion the government would also raise its.

Mr. ILSLEY: That is not correct.

Mr. MacNICOL: In Ontario there is also medical attention.

Mr. MacINNIS: I do not believe there is another matter in regard to which I receive more letters and complaints than I do in connection with the treatment of old age

[Mr. Coldwell.]

pensioners. During these war years we have not had the opportunity of discussing matters of this kind as in other years. It is, however, a matter of the most urgent importance. I notice that the statutory provision, that is the dominion's share of the payment of old age pensions, is down this year by some \$572,000. No doubt that can be accounted for because of the greater employment available than before the war. But instead of the amount being less, if we are going to give any consideration at all to our old people, people who are now not able to look after themselves, the amount should be a great deal more.

May I bring to the attention of the committee the position in which the government and this parliament will find itself in the mind of the general public. Hundreds of thousands of the general public come in contact with these old age pensioners. In every community there are a number. Yesterday we provided a pension of \$1,800 a year for the widow of a certain person. Thousands of widows in this country, mothers who have raised the sons who fought the last war, and some perhaps in this one; people who have given their lives to building up and making this country what it is, are expected to get along on the measly amount of \$20 a month. In many cases it is less. I think the average last year was about \$19, the amount that our dollar-a-year men require for one day's expenses. It is time that the government of this country made up its mind that something better than that is required. I could have brought a sheaf of letters here which would indicate the terrible circumstances of these people. In my own province, although the amount has been raised—

The CHAIRMAN: Order. I must draw the attention of the hon. gentleman to the point I already mentioned a minute ago. The item of \$31,372,500, which covers pensions, is statutory. The question of policy has been fixed by statute. The hon. gentleman is now discussing the adequacy of such pensions. That can be done only at an appropriate time during the session. We are now concerned only with the expense under item 51, which is for the administration of old age pensions. Details appear at page 79.

Mr. NEILL: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. MacINNIS: Mr. Chairman—

The CHAIRMAN: Order.

Mr. MacINNIS: Well, I had the floor. If the hon. member for Comox-Alberni wishes to help out in this, as I believe he does, he will have an opportunity so far as I am concerned. I would draw the attention of the