

will be welcome that at last the Government are going to blast it out—or whatever it is they intend to do with it.

Having touched on some material matters mentioned in the Throne Speech, I want to refer to the more distinctly humanitarian projects which, of course, are of particular interest to me as a woman. I welcome the inclusion of the promise of legislation to make substantial increases for public construction projects with a view to helping to meet regional and seasonal unemployment crises. In view of what I have said about the development, growth and expansion of British Columbia, some may suppose that we in that province should be immune from crises of this kind, but even in our salubrious climate, because of too much rain, or from other causes, outdoor industry must occasionally stop. Then, of course, there are other factors over which we have no control—outside factors, which tend to upset the delicate balance of the economy. The fact that wages and standards of living are higher on the Pacific coast than anywhere else in Canada makes it very difficult for shipbuilding, forest, and some other industries to compete in world markets with industries whose wages are lower and, in consequence, every now and again we are faced with a burden of unemployment.

Also, there is the fact that the genial climate of British Columbia attracts to that province unemployed workers from the prairies and other parts of the country where nature is not quite so kind, who move to the West in the hope of finding work under rather more comfortable conditions. All these factors tend to enlarge our problem of unemployment, particularly in a city like Vancouver, which is not only a seaport but a border town. Vancouver has been having a worrisome time. Frankly, I think its troubles have been exaggerated a little, but, in any event, no one with any feeling at all in his heart can but sympathize with these unemployed people, whether they number 100 or 20,000. I am very glad to see that something is going to be done in that connection, both by way of public construction projects and by an increase in the benefits paid under the Unemployment Insurance Act as well as by general amendments to increase the effectiveness of the act itself.

I know there are a good many complaints that this is not enough. I have not seen any figures or any bills, so I cannot tell whether it is enough, but at least it is a step in the right direction. It is encouraging to those who are undergoing these hardships at the present time to know that the Government is at least trying to do something to help them.

I am, of course, glad indeed to see that there is to be an increase in the basic rates payable under the War Veterans' Allowance Act, and a higher ceiling on permissible incomes. I have always maintained that something is wrong with a policy which decrees that a man or woman should not be allowed to earn more than a certain sum. I think it is a very bad principle and I do not believe we should put any ceiling on permissible incomes of any kind. Any person who has the initiative and energy to go out and work should be allowed to do all he or she possibly can and not be subjected to an arbitrary restriction on income, for such a policy stultifies initiative and energy.

I am very glad to see that we are also going to consider lowering the age of eligibility of blind persons for pensions, and raising their income ceilings. I do not think we can do enough for the blind. Never having lost the use of my eyes, even temporarily, I find it difficult to imagine what it would be like to go through life without sight. I feel we should do everything we possibly can to make things easier for those who are afflicted in this way.

Now I want to come down to a particular problem which besets British Columbia perhaps more than any other province. Apart from factors I have mentioned—our salubrious climate and the climatic amenities—the leisurely tempo of living draws to our province a great number of elderly people from all parts of Canada. We welcome them. Many of them are retired and have means, but many others are working people and they come with their families. We are glad to have them all, but the fact remains that their presence has helped to create a problem.

In 1954 the population of British Columbia was 1,266,000. I should like to emphasize that as the provincial area is 366,000 square miles, there is an average of about three persons to every square mile, most of whom are concentrated on the coast. Of that population of 1,266,000, 13 per cent were in the 65-years-and-over age bracket, as compared with 8.5 per cent for Canada as a whole; and 20 per cent were between the ages of 45 and 64. Here I come to a point which is to me particularly interesting. In Victoria we have the highest ratio for all Canada of citizens in the over-65 age group. One in every six citizens in that city is over 65. As I suggested before, this speaks volumes for the climatic and other amenities of the province. We have no deep snow, no extremes of heat and cold, no mosquitoes, no tornadoes, none of the things you people in the rest of Canada have. The percentage of the 65-years-and-over age group in ratio to Victoria's overall population has quadrupled since 1941. Some of the people who have