

Pensions Act

are not in need, it should be attempted, through other legislation, to give to those who are really in need a sufficient amount so as to enable them to meet their actual requirements, in order to remove within our society those distressing cases of hopeless destitution which are so numerous in Canada.

By amending this legislation, we could provide for their needs without burdening our budget with excessive expenditures, because assistance would be given where it is needed, and thus we could release our resources for productive purposes and give those responsible for that production adequate remuneration and compensation for their services.

I unreservedly support the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who is not only asking for a review of pension rates, but of the entire system, in order to make the necessary amendments.

[Text]

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): When my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) spoke earlier in this debate he outlined the attitude of this party in general terms with respect to the subject matter before us. I think that over the years we have, unfortunately, put the entire question of providing assistance and help to the needy out of the public treasury on the basis of either a handout or some reason of expediency. It is unfortunate, and it is one of the reasons why we have a disgraceful situation in Canada today with respect to the whole field of social security, of which old age assistance, disabled persons pensions and blind persons pensions are a part.

It is almost a year ago, now—I believe it was on December 20, 1962—that the national council of welfare came into being, pursuant to an act of this parliament passed while the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Monteith) held the office now held by the hon. lady. One of the ideas we had about this council was that it would be dealing with, and studying items such as we have before us for consideration, now. I should like, in this regard—that is, with regard to the question of planning some program of concerted effort in this field of social security assistance—to make reference to the annual report of the Department of National Health and Welfare for the year ended March 31, 1962. While I am at it, perhaps I may point out that this report, the one which was tabled by the hon. lady on the opening day of this session, is the last one available. At least, I sent a note to the library and this is the last report they have. It is more than a year and a half old. Nevertheless, it does contain

[Mr. Martineau.]

some pertinent information about the general subject matter before us and I should like to make a few references to it and make one or two short quotations from it. The following appears at page 150 under the heading "Income Security". As I say, this report is already a year and a half old and, undoubtedly, the study which went into this took place some while before the date of publication. It reads as follows:

The program of old age, survivors and disability benefits announced in the speech from the throne, January 1962, required the active participation of staff members for a number of months beforehand in discussions to plan the new program.

It is true this relates to the previous government and to a previous speech from the throne. But it does say that the staff of the department actively participated in studying this whole field for a number of months in order to plan a new program. Then it goes on to indicate that the income security section supervisor spent two weeks in Great Britain, that the director spent several days in Baltimore and Washington reviewing the old age survivors and disability insurance program in the United States, that studies were made on the situation in Australia, New Zealand, and so on. We are told that the work of the Ontario committee on portable pensions was examined and that the staff produced a number of bulletins and made an exhaustive study and survey of the particular question which is now before us.

It seems regrettable that at this late stage in the session, with all this active work behind her, the minister has not yet assessed it and is still unable to transform it into some kind of co-ordinated plan and program which the house and the country could consider.

I wonder if I may call it five o'clock?

Mr. Pickersgill: If the hon. member is the last speaker, I wonder if he could be allowed to finish in a few minutes and we could then get the bill through.

An hon. Member: Take the whole hour.

Mr. Howard: I did not know the prescience of the Secretary of State (Mr. Pickersgill) extended to knowing how long I might take. But I am one of those who have been most vociferous against intruding on the private members' hour and, inasmuch as I have the floor at five o'clock, I do not think it is I who should be asked if I want to go on. I believe the others should be asked.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder whether Your Honour would ask the house if there is unanimous agreement to continuing after five o'clock in the hope of making progress.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.