

Pensions Act

there were some 8,000 in receipt of blindness allowances today. In the disabled category there were between 36,000 and 43,000 in receipt of allowances, the variation being caused by the increased earnings which were allowable when making the calculation as to whether the recipients were entitled to the allowances.

In February, 1962 I had the pleasure and privilege of piloting through the house, effective as of February 1, 1962, a further increase in old age security benefits from \$55 to \$65 a month and, in addition, an equal increase in the old age assistance allowances and payments to the blind and the disabled. Here again I should like to emphasize that we made all this legislation effective at the same date.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that I thought it was a crying shame that these three categories of recipients of assistance should not all have these increases available to them on the same date, that is the date when an increase was provided for in old age security benefits. Now they have missed two months. Maybe this does not mean very much to some of us, but I know the minister is able to appreciate, having been in office now for some time, just what it means to the individuals concerned. Both in 1957 and in 1962 the government of that day did increase these three categories of benefits at the same time as old age security payments were increased.

Again, permissible earnings were increased by \$180 a month in February, 1962 in respect of a single person, and \$360 a month in respect to a married person.

Miss LaMarsh: Per year.

Mr. Monteith: I beg your pardon; the minister is correct. I am wondering just how the calculation is made. I am not doing this through ill intent, but I am interested; because back in 1957, when the old age security allowance was increased by \$9, the allowable earnings were increased by \$120 and \$240 per year. Then in 1962, when the allowance was increased by \$10, the allowable earnings were increased by \$180 for a single person and \$360 per year for married persons. Now, still with a \$10 increase per month, we are back to \$120 and \$240. I am assuming the increase in February, 1962 was probably to round the figure out to an even figure. Perhaps the minister will correct me if I am wrong in this assumption.

I could not agree more with the minister's statement that these increases will contribute to a greater degree of stability and comfort; I believe that was the phrase she used. I heartily agree with this approach to the measures before us. However, as I say, the

[Mr. Monteith.]

amendment should have been presented earlier. It should have been presented so as to take effect as of October 1 instead of December 1.

I notice that the minister recently made a speech in Saskatoon. According to the *Star-Phoenix* she wishes to broaden the scope of the Canada pension plan considerably beyond what was apparently her intention as indicated in the resolution which appeared on the order paper earlier this session. I am wondering whether she discussed any of these changes with the representatives of the provinces at the recent conference or, if not, whether she proposes to do so. I should be interested to know when it is expected that this wider plan will be proposed to the house.

Naturally we in this party intend to vote for the measure which is before us now. We pleaded for it earlier in this session, and I can only regret that its provisions are not made retroactive to October 1. I regret most strongly the lack of any retroactive feature, and I cannot help but condemn the government for the omission.

I have nothing further to say at this time. I do feel that these three measures will be of the utmost benefit to all those concerned, and that they should have been brought into being as of October 1.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as the house is aware the bill before us raises to a possible \$75 a month the pension or allowance available under the Old Age Assistance Act, the Blind Persons Act and the Disabled Persons Act. We in this party have asked for these increases to be made. We now welcome the legislation. We shall support it. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it is our hope and our desire, despite the wide interest there is in this subject in the House of Commons, that because of the unanimity of support for this measure it will not take very long to get through, so we can be certain that those affected by these various pieces of legislation will get these increases promptly. We hope, therefore, that any time which is taken up in speaking briefly on this subject will not be interpreted as anything other than support for this measure even though there are two or three things which need to be said at this time.

First I wish to echo the remarks made by the hon. member for Perth with reference to the effective date of the proposed increases in these three shared programs. The Minister of National Health and Welfare relied on the fact that no province had asked for an earlier date at the recent federal-provincial conference. She also told us some