

Mr. MAYBANK: I have felt for a long time that the pension should be increased, particularly since we have adopted a cost-of-living bonus since the war. If any persons at all are entitled to the cost-of-living bonus, surely those living on an old age pension should receive it. We accepted many years ago the responsibility for persons who are over seventy, and if we agree that the cost-of-living bonus should be paid in certain cases, I cannot see where there is any argument against it for the old age pensioners. The only point that could arise would be the constitutional difficulty. But that was overcome before, and if there is a will to do a thing you can generally overcome difficulties of that sort. It was overcome when the scheme was initiated. I do not wish to do any more at the moment than simply to support the general principle that there should be an improvement in the position of the old age pensioners. I should also like to express my approval of the remarks made by the hon. member for Renfrew South with reference to the federal government joining in the medical services scheme which has been instituted by Ontario. If a similar effort were made in this regard the rest of the provinces would probably come into such a scheme. Let me conclude by saying as emphatically as I can that the old age pensioners are receiving less than they should get in view of all the circumstances of life to-day.

Mrs. CASSELMAN: I, too, feel that the amount the old age pensioners receive is not adequate to the need. I would join with other members in urging that consideration be given to increasing the amount of the pension, or at least to granting them the cost-of-living bonus.

Mrs. NIELSEN: Can the minister give us the definite assurance before we pass this item that the officers of his department will give special consideration to this whole problem with a view to definite action being taken after this session?

Mr. ILSLEY: The consideration of the matter is really not the responsibility of the officers of the department. It is a government responsibility, and I would not want to delegate it to anybody else. The responsibility for old age pensioners is a provincial responsibility. I am unable to see in what respect there is any difference between old age pensions and the mother's allowance in that respect, because the mother's allowance is assumed entirely by the province, and the province fixes the amount. The dominion has an agreement to contribute up to \$15 a month to the old age pensions paid by the province. That is the constitutional position so far as

this government is concerned. We did not think that in time of war we should adopt the cost-of-living bonus principle for old age pensioners. If we did that, it would mean that in a period such as 1932 and 1933 we would have to reduce the amount paid to the old age pensioners. The cost-of-living bonus policy is a wage policy, not a policy applicable to compassionate allowances or anything of the kind.

With regard to contributory pensions, I am of the opinion, and I think nearly everybody is, that that would require the addition of certain words to section 91 of the British North America Act. I think it would be a good idea if it were done, but whether we should start that in time of war I do not know. It would mean another deduction from payrolls, and deductions are getting numerous as it is. But eventually I think undoubtedly we shall have to have contributory pensions, and I should think it should be done by the dominion government after the necessary constitutional amendment is made. In the meantime these allowances, which are more or less compassionate allowances, we treat as the responsibility of the provinces, and we are contributing up to \$15 a month to the provinces to enable them to discharge their responsibility. We are prepared to change the regulations for any province so that if the province wishes to give a cost-of-living bonus or anything else to supplement the pension it can do so without lessening the amount of our contribution. British Columbia and Alberta have done that already.

Mr. MacNICOL: And Ontario has the medical services scheme.

Mr. ILSLEY: Yes, but that would be a provincial responsibility purely. We have no authority to share that, nor would we desire to share that, any more than we do the supplemental allowance paid by British Columbia and Alberta.

Mr. COLDWELL: The minister has spoken of contributory pensions supplemental to the pensions now paid; that is, people who are going to contribute will still receive the old age pension. I suggest that some consideration be given, if we are to continue compulsory savings in our budget, to the advisability of earmarking a percentage of that money for contributory pensions.

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

The committee resumed at two o'clock.

Mr. ILSLEY: Before we proceed with this item there is just one remark I should like