

Mr. STEVENS: Therefore would it not be better to have the conference prior to the passing of this legislation?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I think my hon. friend, if he looks into his heart of hearts, will agree with me when I say that if we are in a position to put before representatives of the provinces a plan which has been drafted and carefully considered, and an act passed by this parliament, and to invite the attention of the provinces to what may be essential in the way of amendment to it or its relation to their own legislation, a measure of co-operation can be obtained that would not be possible if the provinces were simply brought together without any concrete legislation before them for consideration. I think what will happen is this: under this legislation, which I hope will be passed this session, until the provinces themselves undertake to conform to the regulations here laid down, not a dollar will be taken out of the public treasury. That will mean that the provinces will have to consider whether or not this is an act they will care to come under.

Mr. WHITE (Mount Royal): All the provinces?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: No, any province which cares to adopt legislation of that character. In that regard may I say that as between the different provinces I fail to see where there is a distinction to be drawn between the money voted by this parliament say for the purposes of immigration, which may go to place a man or woman in any one of the provinces, and money voted for preserving the individual, no matter in what part of the Dominion he may be found. Human beings are the greatest of the resources of the country. What we are here considering is human life. An individual, no matter which province he is in, is an asset to the Dominion as a whole, and it is from that point of view that the Dominion is, I think, considering this matter.

Mr. WHITE (Mount Royal): May I point out that in the case of an immigrant he becomes a producer, while old age pensions are given to indigents?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend has presented a point of view which I hope this House will consider. He says that one man is a producer and the other an indigent. I have here a letter which I would like to read to the House. It was written by an elderly lady in Alberta in June, 1925. I will not read the whole letter, because it has some references to matters which I think need not be

placed on record at the moment, although I shall be glad to show the entire letter to my hon. friend if he so desires. The letter begins by drawing my attention to the fact that this parliament recently voted a large sum of money by way of an annuity to one who had been a distinguished member of parliament. It points out that sums of money were voted by this parliament to cover some of the expenses incident to the visit of a great general from overseas and for other purposes, and it continues:

I am impelled to write you on the old age pension. The poor old people, the pioneers of Canada, who have worked hard against great odds and nothing like a salary in return, have to stand aside while these large sums are disbursed. It will be extremely inconsistent should the old age pension bill not pass very soon, with the powers that be in parliament.

The letter next refers to a sum of money that had been raised for assistance in some connection, and then goes on:

Worthy these gentlemen may all be, but it gives one the notion that if men getting such immense salaries and sums of money cannot make provision for a time when they cannot work, how possibly can a working man do so? It would be a boon if something can be done to relieve the hardships of the working class, especially when they reach an age which makes it difficult to live. Most of whom cannot work at an advanced age, and are not wanted at work either. My husband is turned 72, and is as yet strong and able to work, and does work hard. Still he is feeling the effects of age, along with work, which he has never shirked, but has had his share of trouble and losses, making him feel that he, along with others, deserve some consideration from the country.

I say to my hon. friend from Mount Royal (Mr. White) that the woman who wrote that letter was not an indigent; her husband, even had he been unable to do any work, is not to be classed as an indigent; they are two people who have helped to make this country what it is; they have helped to make the wealth of this country.

The whole principle of this old age pension is based, not on the thought that the state is giving something to an indigent or that the state owes something to individuals, but on a sense* of social justice arising out of a condition of society based on the rights of private poverty. While my hon. friend and I may have been fortunate enough to start in life with a little capital and to have had opportunities to make investments that will enable us as we get on to maturer years to look forward to the period between seventy and eighty with a degree of confidence—while that may be possible for him and for me, it is not possible for hundreds of thousands of people in this country, for people working on the farm and in the factory, the people who are day after day producing the