

NEW LEGISLATION FOR THE BLIND

The present Old Age Pensions Act also includes provisions for blind persons from the age of 21. These provisions have now been replaced by a separate Blind Persons Act, as recommended by the leading associations for the blind. This Act, which also was passed last week, will become effective on January 1 next. In a number of ways this Act will make more generous the conditions governing the allowances already being paid to blind Canadians. An additional number of more than 2,000 blind persons will be able to benefit from this Act's special provisions and from the universal pension that blind persons, too, will receive at 70.

THE UNIVERSAL PENSION AT 70

While the Federal Government will pay half of the cost of old age assistance, it will assume the entire responsibility for financing the cost of universal pensions to be provided for in the Old Age Security Act. Under the terms of this Act, anyone in Canada who has reached the age of 70 and who can qualify under the residence requirement, will receive \$40 a month without means test of any kind.

As the Prime Minister pointed out recently, these universal pensions, from the start, will have a contributory feature, and every person who has sufficient resources to contribute towards the cost of the universal pension will be required to do so.

For this universal pension, there will be a residence qualification similar to that for old age assistance, but otherwise it will be paid to everyone in Canada -- to citizen or non-citizen, and to the Indians, the first Canadians.

The cost of this measure, which will benefit some 715,000 persons -- almost half of whom are now in receipt of old age pensions -- will be about \$343,000,000 a year.

BETTER PROVISION FOR OLD AGE

This new two-fold programme for old age security is one of the outstanding social advances of our time in Canada. It is a programme that other countries will admire and that some, I am sure, will want to imitate.

This is a programme of which every Canadian can be proud. The provinces have collaborated in its development through the years, and I know that they will continue to play their part in that portion of the new programme in which they share the financial responsibility.

I should like to recall what I said in the House of Commons ten days ago, in reference to this new provision for Canada's older citizens.

The history of this quarter-century, from 1926 to 1951, is the story of our awakening as a nation to a new understanding of what we can do, through government, for our older citizens and for their security. This concern for our senior citizens is the touchstone to the true quality of our way of life.