

Supply—Health and Welfare

home. There is an interference and dislocation of established normal habits in the home. There is, resentment toward the restriction of personal freedom enjoyed before the husband retired. There is difficulty experienced in respect of the cost of accommodation and the inability to obtain employment. There are many problems affecting widows particularly, including the financial, hospitalization and the cost of drugs.

Mr. Chairman, you might ask me, as well might the minister and her advisers who look at me with some interest and perhaps some scepticism, what would be the value of such a survey? It would reveal on a national instead of a local or regional basis, what are the major and common problems among Canadians 65 years old and over. I submit with great sincerity to the minister that such a survey would result in the assembly of valuable and accurate statistical information. Such information could be the foundation on which the federal government could formulate a policy to deal with these problems. Has such a survey been made on a national basis, Mr. Chairman? To the best of my knowledge no such survey has been made.

I should like to quote from the evidence of Mrs. Jean Good, who appeared before the Senate committee on aging. At page 67 of that evidence, in answer to Senator Grosart, who asked the same question I have posed now, she said:

I really do not know. This, as you mentioned, sir, requires investigation in Canada. We do not know enough about the cost of living.

Then Senator Roebuck said:

What we should really be doing is searching around for what we can do or what we can recommend to be done, including an increase in the pension and everything else that might help the lot of the older citizen.

Then Senator Grosart again says:

I think we should get at the facts.

Mr. Chairman, how would a survey be conducted? It could be conducted of course by co-ordinating other government agencies, and it might well be done under private auspices. I can anticipate the arguments of the advisers to the minister who are sitting before her. I know they would say at the moment that there is a committee in the other place in respect of aging; but the honourable senators who have sat on that committee, and the witnesses who have appeared before it, stated that the main problem was in assessing the needs of the aging. Assessing the needs of our so-called older citizens is difficult because of the lack of concrete information and

[Mr. Turner.]

facts. Of course the minister's advisers may well say, we are holding a national conference on aging in 1966, and that will take care of the problem. Surely this national convention will not prove to be of much value, or of as much value as it could have, unless it is able to operate on the basis of concrete information assembled between now and that time. I would therefore in this brief intervention urge the minister and her advisers, in cooperation perhaps with the Department of Labour, to institute on a national basis a survey of the older people of this country, to ascertain from their own mouths what their problems and needs are, and not impose upon them suggestions preconceived by experts, and preconceived by professions which deal, admittedly in a dedicated way, with their problems. We should ascertain in this way from their own mouths the hopes, frustrations and expectations of these citizens.

I am sure the minister has had this quotation of that great prime minister of Great Britain, Mr. Disraeli, drawn to her attention. He said, let us hope that the heritage of old age is not despair. This problem will become more and more direct, and it will be incumbent upon the minister as she proceeds with her duties to solve it. I urge her to give consideration to the suggestions I have made this evening.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): Mr. Chairman, before the hon. member for Huron speaks I wonder whether I may be permitted to ask the hon. member who has just sat down one question? I asked him a question earlier in respect of reducing the pensionable age from 70 to 65, and he replied in the negative. I will put my question in this way. Can I then assume that he is against reducing the eligible age for old age pensions, or security, from 70 to 65? I should like the hon. member to put his position in this respect on record, and stop riding the fence.

Mr. Turner: I should like to thank the hon. member for his usual succinct question, and say to him that my reply to his earlier question was neither in the affirmative nor in the negative.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): You are riding the fence, then.

Mr. Turner: I would urge the hon. member to wait for the institution of the Canada pension plan, which I am sure will solve this difficulty to his satisfaction and mine.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): When will it be instituted? I should like to ask one more question,