

Disabled Persons Act

Ontario, 11.8 per cent in 1956-57 to 34.8 per cent today; Manitoba, from 21.2 per cent to 42 per cent; Saskatchewan, from 20.1 per cent to 38.3 per cent; Alberta, from 14.1 per cent to 35.8 per cent, and British Columbia from 22.5 per cent to 46.7 per cent.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition whether or not he and his supporters are going to do away with these shared programs, as he said in his speech in Quebec. I ask him why he made that sudden change of front, having stated in January, 1961 that the very reverse is the policy of the Liberal party. I might go on from there. I think it is worth comparing the federal budget deficits with the increases in payments made to the provinces from April 1, 1957. The annual contribution in 1957 amounted to \$689.4 million.

Mr. Pickersgill: It was all under Liberal legislation.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes. Members opposite are now taking the credit for our giving far more than they ever considered was proper. We all build on the legislation of the past. That is the legacy of parliament. The only difference is that the people opposite starved the old age pensioners; they starved the provinces. We decided that increased assistance should be given, and the result of that assistance is that we have incurred deficits.

Now let me tell the committee the total increases as compared with the base year, 1956-57. The increase in the contributions to the provinces in the year 1957-58—

Mr. Pickersgill: Under Liberal legislation. I was just pointing out to the Prime Minister that all the payments in 1957-58 were under legislation passed under a Liberal government. Not one sou came from the present government.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is exactly the reason I am mentioning the year 1957-58; the hon. member has just learned it now. I do so because I stated, the committee will remember, that there was a change made, and I want the figures to be correct. In 1957-58 the increase was \$147.7 million over the year 1956-57. In 1958-59 the increase was \$348.5 million as compared with the base year 1956-57; in 1959-60 the increase amounted to \$574.7 million, and in 1960-61 it was \$626.2 million. For the year 1961-62 the estimate is an increase of \$780.7 million over the base year.

I am glad I have had the chance to explain that and to give the opposition an early opportunity to indicate which of these increases they would do without; because if they accept them, there must be a deficit unless taxation is increased. Hon. gentlemen opposite can take their choice; whichever

horn of the dilemma they find most comfortable, they may take. These are the facts. When hon. gentlemen opposite go about the country saying this government is a spending government, they should keep them in mind.

I have shown, now, whether or not increases have taken place, and the reason for those increases. What did hon. gentlemen opposite say in 1956 when they had a big surplus? The city council of Toronto got in touch with the hon. member for Essex East, and in this connection I read the headline of a press report dated May 8, 1956. "Government Can't Afford \$50 Pension—Martin". That was when they had a surplus. That is when they had the surplus of which they boast. Then the article went on to say, under a Canadian Press dateline:

Health minister Martin has told city council the federal government cannot afford to raise old age pensions to \$50 from \$40 a month.

In a letter made public yesterday answering council's request for higher pensions, Mr. Martin said the raise would cost an additional \$100 million a year. This year the pension bill would be \$400 million.

Mr. Martin said he thought council would agree the federal government, by providing 90 per cent of all funds now for old age pensions "is carrying out its fair share—"

And does the committee know what the hon. gentleman said? He had a suggestion to make. I hear hon. members opposite today talking about \$75 a month, and they raise the ante every time they make a speech. A policy was announced on January 10 or 11 by the Leader of the Opposition on the question of pensions. They sent out documents, and I have one here. The Liberals have the answers, they say. Then they changed them after we had decided to raise the pension by \$10 a month. But this is what was said in 1956 by the hon. member for Essex East:

Certain provinces are on their own initiative paying supplementary allowances or cost of living bonuses over and above the \$40 basic pension. Among these is the province of Ontario, which has provided that the province and municipalities can share in a supplement of this kind on a means test basis. I am aware that Toronto is participating in this arrangement, but it is my understanding that the total for the province is approximately 1900 cases, of which approximately 1200 are in Toronto. I take it that these are the cases which, in the opinion of the provincial and municipal authorities, were felt to be in need of something more than the \$40 a month pension. In relation to the total number receiving old age security or old age assistance, this is not a large percentage.

Then he went on to say this:

If there are still a number of persons who require some additional assistance, it does not seem unfair to suggest that the provincial and municipal governments also have some responsibility in this matter.

That was the attitude taken in 1956, and that, again, was the attitude in 1957.