

*Old Age Security Act Amendment*

The minister said that this is not his responsibility, but at least he should be acquainted with the laws in the various provinces at the present time. The decision by a province to cut these people off will not be done through the whim of some premier but will happen because the legislation in the province so prescribes. If this is the case in some provinces people will get their medical cards only if they are on some kind of supplementation.

**Mr. MacEachen:** This is not the case.

**Mr. Fane:** Did the minister say this was not the case?

**Mr. MacEachen:** It is not necessarily the case. We can share in the health services even if there is no financial supplementation under the Canada Assistance Plan.

**Mr. Knowles:** I thank the minister for leading up to the point I am making because it seemed to me from what he said earlier that the government could share in the medical costs only of those pensioners who receive supplementary payments. I gather that he has gone a step further and now says that this can be done for medical costs only. If this is so I am very pleased to hear it. May I ask him whether the regulations under the Canada Assistance Plan are completed and whether there are any agreements between Ottawa and the provinces with respect to that plan?

**Mr. MacEachen:** No, Mr. Chairman, the regulations have not yet been submitted to the Governor in Council. I have indicated my hope that I will be able to submit them very shortly and I hope it will be possible to sign agreements with the provinces as soon as they have been submitted. Consultation with all ten provinces and the development of regulations which will apply to this big new program have been a very big operation. Obviously a good deal of time has elapsed but it has been taken up with this very important work and I do not think that any time has been lost by the officials in getting ahead with the regulations.

**Mr. Knowles:** I do not deny that this is a big task and I am prepared to give the officials the time they need to do it, but I think the minister has been quite unfair with the house and the country in the way in which he has thrown the Canada Assistance Plan at us as the answer to all these problems. For all practical purposes it has not had any effect. To say that the Canada Assistance Plan solves the

[Mr. Knowles.]

problems is not to play fair with us inasmuch as he has had to admit that the regulations have not yet been submitted for approval to the Governor in Council and agreements with the provinces have yet to be signed. Six months have passed since our approval of the Canada Assistance Plan and another six months will pass before it becomes an effective operation; yet these changes are to come into effect on January 1.

**Mr. McCleave:** Mr. Chairman, the revelations made by the minister are all the more shocking when one considers not only the point made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre but also the fact that we have spent weeks in dealing with medicare so that it may be put into operation by July 1, 1968. The minister has not done his homework in putting into action something that was given so much fanfare and heraldry by the minister and his minions earlier this year.

● (9:30 p.m.)

I want to make a point to reinforce what my colleague said about the difficulties that beneficiaries under provincial plans will have. The provinces are in this field because of the vacuum that has been left by this government, of which the minister is part, over the years. Anybody would concede that if ever an issue was determined in the election of November 1965, it was that the old age pensioners were not getting a proper break. That was the loudest voice which spoke out on that day.

I can understand why the provinces, tired of the dilatoriness of the federal government, have had to move into this field. At least their politicians hear the voice of the people and are aware of their needs. I am surprised that the minister should dodge behind a kind of anti-co-operative federalism—I thought he was a proponent of the other kind—in the answers he gave earlier tonight. He has told us of correspondence with the government of Prince Edward Island, and I think with two other provinces, with regard to the measure we are now considering. Did these provinces ask that the means test be obliterated? I imagine they did. What was the request of those provinces and what was the minister's answer?

**Mr. MacEachen:** First of all, Mr. Chairman, I wish to make a comment about the concern of hon. members for the provinces and their supplementation programs. I think we ought to keep this problem in perspective. In Canada there are 1,200,000 pensioners. The provinces provide supplementation for 60,000