

more old age pension beneficiaries, though we have 60 per cent more population. The total amount paid in pensions in Australia is \$93,580,000; in Canada for this year it will be roughly \$30,000,000 from the federal government, which bears three-quarters of the cost, which would bring our total up to \$40,500,000. If we were paying in proportion to our population the same amount as Australia is paying, we would pay out \$146,000,000 a year. Yet we tremble about inflation and about our financial position in the war when we think of going not nearly as far as Australia has gone. Our age limit for both men and women is seventy; in Australia it is sixty-five for men and sixty for women. The average pension paid throughout the dominion ranges from 61 cents a day in British Columbia down to about 38 cents a day in Prince Edward Island. Does any man in this house believe that an old age pensioner can get along in the cities of Canada on \$20 a month? Yet this parliament has frozen that amount by an act which was passed in 1927. It is this parliament that fixed the age limit at seventy years; it is this parliament that has put on the ceiling of \$20 a month, and it is the duty of this parliament to reduce that age limit and to lift that ceiling. I for one feel more disappointed over going home without doing that much for the old age pensioners than in connection with anything else that has ever happened in this house.

I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to another reason why these pensions should be federalized, something that was foreseen by the Prime Minister when he brought in this measure. I refer to the disparity as between the provinces in the amounts paid. Is there any Canadian who speaks of national unity who does not believe that every old age pensioner, whether he be in British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario, or Prince Edward Island, should receive the same amount? Yet here is how it works out on a monthly basis, according to the figures I was able to secure from the pensions branch of the Department of Finance. The average monthly pension is as follows:

British Columbia	\$19 02
Alberta	18 63
Saskatchewan	17 17
Manitoba	18 70
Ontario	18 66
Quebec	16 20
New Brunswick	14 89
Nova Scotia	15 06
Prince Edward Island	11 57

Of course, if you want to build a nation on disunity, leave things such as old age pensions under provincial jurisdiction; leave

[Mr. McGeer.]

this sort of disparity throughout the land as evidence that impartial justice is not the goal of federal government.

There is one other feature on which I want to say just a word.

The CHAIRMAN: Order. The hon. member has now spoken for forty minutes.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Perhaps the hon. member might be allowed to proceed.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Mr. McGEER: Thank you; after all, I have not taken up very much time this year.

I wanted to say to hon. members that we are entirely wrong in our attitude when we think we cannot finance old age pensions. I recall standing in my place in this house and pleading with the government to put people to work. We needed roads; we needed a lot of things. We were told we could not find the money, and that we had to tighten our belts. We were told we had to balance the budget and that we had to keep our credit good. We had to borrow where the accumulated savings of the world were. I said at that time that if war ever comes one of the things we shall find out is that we shall have no difficulty in finding unlimited amounts of money to carry on the destructive enterprise of war. Will anybody say that a nation which can find billions upon billions—which we have found—with ease would have any difficulty in finding enough money to pay the old age pensioners a reasonable living allowance? It does not add up to common sense.

But remember this, that when you give an old age pensioner a living allowance he spends it. He puts it to work. He buys his food and his shelter. He provides employment for the primary producer, who produces the eggs and bacon, butter, bread, vegetables and other things that he needs, as the bare necessities of life. That money circulates throughout the community, and it probably adds up to twenty times the volume of business that the actual old age pension itself amounted to.

When we come to deal with the values of that type of investment it seems to me that we should be pretty well on the way with it now, because when we come to put back to work all the men we have in war industry, all the women we have in war industry, and all those who will be retiring from the fighting forces, we are going to find that one of the real social problems is that of eliminating producers and at the same time continuing them as consumers. That is one reason why the age limit should be reduced, and the amount of pension increased.