

it is quite sound to incorporate such a suggestion in an old age pension act which is primarily a provincial matter, which must be administered by the provinces and half the cost of which must be borne by the provinces. In my opinion it would seem that the federal government would be passing off a part of its responsibility for war disabilities to governments which have no responsibility in that connection at all.

Mr. MANION: Why did not the provincial governments have as much responsibility for the war as the federal government?

Mr. SPEAKMAN: It has been generally admitted in this House and in the provincial houses that any disability arising from the war is the responsibility of the federal government alone.

Mr. McGIBBON: That is all nonsense.

Mr. SPEAKMAN: I have looked the matter up, and that is what I find. I believe it would simply mean that when the time comes for the revision of the pension act to deal with these cases, that work would be handicapped by the fact that this legislation had already been passed. We in this House must not shirk our responsibility, and that responsibility must be carried out in a more generous way than is allowed under this measure. I think the objection is a sound one, not because I believe those men should not be taken care of but because I believe premature old age due to war service is just as much a war disability as wounds or gas or nervous troubles.

Mr. MANION: But these men are not being looked after.

Mr. SPEAKMAN: They will be looked after, and in my opinion this will only be passing the buck to the provinces and would in the long run prevent or delay the passing of such legislation by the federal government.

Mr. EDWARDS (Frontenac): I think every member of this House has had men come to him or write him who have served in the theatre of war but who have been unable to get on the pension list; there are many such cases. I have no doubt whatever that generally speaking the ages of these men have been advanced by at least five years. That is to say, comparing a man who did not go to war at seventy years of age with a man who did serve in a theatre of war, we may take it as a general proposition that the second man is old at sixty-five. In regard to this matter, Mr. Chairman, I find myself very much in agreement with the Minister of Health. This old age pension scheme is one in which the

federal government is asking the coöperation of the provinces, and the responsibility for the administration of the act will be placed upon the provinces. In regard to pensioning those soldiers who become old at sixty-five, or younger than that if you like—

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Probably sixty.

Mr. EDWARDS (Frontenac): Very true. I say that is a responsibility that primarily, and secondarily, and all the way down the line from A to Z, rests upon the Dominion of Canada as a whole. It is not the province of Ontario or the province of Quebec or any other province on which the responsibility rests for sending the men to the war. It was the Dominion of Canada that had that responsibility, and it is a duty devolving upon the people of the whole of Canada and the federal government to look after and provide for the soldiers who saw service in the war. It may be that there are not many of them at the present time who are nearing sixty-five, although I do believe that there were very many men who saw service overseas, who in their zeal to go across misrepresented their age, representing themselves as younger than they actually were. But apart altogether from whether you put the age limit at sixty or sixty-five, we have got to consider, and I think we ought to consider it now, the best ways and means of facing this problem. It is a solemn and sacred duty resting upon the government of this country to consider carefully how we can play the game and keep faith with the men who served overseas in the theatre of war and whose earning powers were thereby depreciated. It is our duty, and no part of that duty, as a matter of principle, should be placed upon any province. If you shift that responsibility or any part of it on to any province, it will bear more heavily on some provinces perhaps than it will on others. You avoid all that by the federal government assuming what is properly a responsibility resting solely in my judgment upon the federal government. The matter is one which in my opinion should be brought in separately, apart altogether from this old age pension act. It is something which ought to be dealt with, and dealt with speedily, in order that we shall not be disgraced, as all of us should feel we were disgraced, if in the years to come men in dire circumstances and in need of assistance were pointed to as men who had been forgotten by the country they served. We should provide against that by putting on our statute books at the earliest possible moment legislation which will make ample provision for any such cases.