

the lead. The provinces cannot force this upon the dominion, but if the dominion came forward and made a proposal as they did in 1925 and said: Here is what we are willing to do; if you take it, you will get so and so; if you do not take it, you will not. I am sure many provinces would accept the proposal for a larger pension.

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): I said a few words about this matter and then asked the minister whether the provinces had approached him. I intended to complete my remarks. The whole principle of old age pensions is wrong. It is merely charity. If a man is without means, he gets something; if he has means, he does not get anything. We have recognized the fact that unemployment insurance is necessary, and I think it is just as necessary to have a contributory system of old age pensions. Then it would not be a matter of charity. Funds could be built up to take care of it and there would be no drain upon the country. One objection I have to our present system is that these older people are investigated and investigated, and the amount of the pension is kept down as low as possible. The question whether the age should be sixty-five or seventy years is something that could be discussed, but the age limit should vary with the age of the individual. If a man is in good health at 65 years he may not need a pension.

Mr. McCANN: Ontario has made a progressive step along the lines indicated by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Neill). On May 1 or June 1 the Ontario government, on the advice of the Ontario medical association, appropriated \$750,000 to be used to defray the cost of medical attention for people who come under the old age pension scheme and the mothers' allowance. I should like to know from the minister whether the dominion will bear 75 per cent of the expense in connection with old age pensioners. The matter of a contributory pension scheme has been brought up in this house on a number of occasions. It is something which should commend itself to all those who are interested in the social welfare of our people, particularly of our older people. A plan could be put into operation under which people would begin to pay early in life. When they reached the age of 60, 65 or 70 years, they would have returned to them their own money along with an equal contribution by the state. If they did not need assistance when they reached this age, their own money would be returned plus a small rate of interest. I feel sure that if the dominion would agree to contribute to any provincial scheme for

[Mr. Neill.]

the medical care of these people, similar to the one now in effect in Ontario, it would be acceptable to most of the provinces.

Mr. JACKMAN: When the minister replies would he outline what the constitutional position is as between the dominion and the provinces, and state just where the initiative lies in dealing with old age pensions? The feeling is held very generally throughout the country that the amount payable to aged persons who have no other income than the old age pension, or the maximum of \$365 allowed to old age pensioners who have some private means of their own, are too little to get along with in these days, having regard to the increased cost of living.

Mr. QUELCH: I want to add my voice in support of those who have spoken on behalf of the old age pensioners. We have heard a great deal from the government and the Prime Minister about the new social order that is to come after the war. The government is wise in emphasizing that, because from one end of Canada to the other there is fear on the part of the people as to what is going to happen after the war. The Prime Minister has said that unless this new social order is well on its way before the end of the war we may look for it in vain. I do not think the government could find any better way of assuring the people that they are sincere in this matter than by increasing the amount of the old age pension. It might not be wise at this time to decrease the pensionable age but that should be done immediately after the war is over. The last time the Minister of Finance spoke on this subject in the house, I think it was last fall, he mentioned two alternatives, and to-day he referred to one of them. Can he say what the position is regarding the other alternative he laid down, that if the provinces were to ask for an increase in the amount of old age pension the federal government would give the matter serious consideration? How many provinces have asked the government to increase the amount of the old age pension?

Mr. ILSLEY: I could not say at the moment how many have, but certainly it has not been general.

Mr. COLDWELL: Is Saskatchewan one of them?

Mr. ILSLEY: I could not say at the moment.

Mr. QUELCH: Have any of the western provinces asked for an increase?

Mr. ILSLEY: I do not know at the moment.