

and \$179.50—it would be about another \$1 billion, just for that category.

If you were to pay only the GIS, that is, if you were to make the whole payment subject to the income test, that is, the whole \$170 being subject to income test rather than pay the basic \$100 without income test, then the cost would be lower, but the cost to the federal government would still be reasonably close to \$400 million.

In terms of the allocation of funds to old age security in this country, I do not have at hand the figures for making a comparison for ten years ago, but I will give you the figures between 1967 and now. In 1967 we were paying about \$1 billion in old age security. With this particular bill it is going to take us over the \$3 billion mark. So this country has in six years tripled the sums of money allocated to the social security of its senior citizens.

Well, we certainly have not yet done anything similar with respect to the other fields of social security, whether under family allowances or under the Canada Assistance Plan; we must not lose sight of the plight of the deserted mothers, the handicapped, the blind, and all the people who are on social assistance, for which the federal government pays 50 per cent at the present time.

I mentioned in my speech in the house that the payments we are presently making to senior citizens are higher in six out of ten provinces than the payments to a couple with two children, on social assistance.

Senator Benidickson: And much less for single people.

Hon. Mr. Lalonde: That is right. In fact, they are very substantially higher than what is being paid for a couple in any province. If I remember well, the highest amount in a province was something like \$250. We are going to be paying \$341. Some provinces are paying as low as \$200 a month, if I remember correctly.

Let's face it! Some provinces would find it very difficult to pay more than they are paying at the present time. There are others who could afford to pay more, but, as I say, there are some who would find it very difficult. So what we are doing, and, indeed, what we must do as a country, is to look at the total resources available in the field of social security and see that we are going to be fair in the distribution or redistribution of income to all levels of the community.

There has been a tendency on the part of some groups or parties to focus their entire attention on senior citizens, and every time it is suggested that something must be done in the field of social security the only thing they seem to have in mind is raising old age pensions. But there is more to it than that. Our effort, while being fair to the senior citizens and while certainly giving them what is really owed to them for what they have contributed to the country, should not at the same time leave by the wayside all those other groups who are in need, genuine need, and who at the present time are not receiving what one obviously would consider to be their fair share. So that is the situation.

Everything is possible. We could lower the age for old age pensions to 55. I even proposed that it be lowered to 44, myself!

Senator Flynn: You don't look that old, anyway.

Hon. Mr. Lalonde: But how much money is going to be left for the other people in need? That is the type of question we must ask ourselves more and more. I am afraid that we may not have been asking that question enough in this country.

Senator Benidickson: Mr. Minister, you referred to the range of payments to a couple entitled to welfare, either because they are unable to work or because they are disabled, or for other causes. The federal government will pay 50 per cent of those payments to the provinces. Is that right?

Hon. Mr. Lalonde: That is right.

Senator Benidickson: Is there a limit on the amount a province can pay under those circumstances and still receive the 50 per cent contribution from the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Lalonde: No, so long as they subject the claimants to the needs test provided under the Canada Assistance Plan there is no limit.

Senator Benidickson: That brings me to an article in the *Montreal Gazette* of this morning which indicates that it is proposed by the Parti Québécois leader, Mr. Lévesque, that there be a program in the province of Quebec with respect to family allowances which would increase from \$17 to \$45 the payment to a child. He compares that to the present \$12 a month that is proposed. He admits that the largest part of the money to pay for the program would be supplied by the federal government.

Under what legislation would the federal government be obligated to contribute what he says would be \$497 million out of a total expenditure of \$735 million in 1974 for allowances for persons up to 17, if his proposal were accepted?

Hon. Mr. Lalonde: First of all, there is no legislation that would allow for such payments of any sort at the present time. The only means whereby the federal government would contribute 50 per cent, as I say, is under the Canada Assistance Plan, and that is not for family allowances.

In the second place, obviously, if Mr. Lévesque were to be in charge of the province there would be no federal government to deal with, according to his own theory. So I do not see how he can argue that this money would come from the federal government.

But I cannot take these claims too seriously. I have seen some of the proposals of the Parti Québécois in Quebec in their so-called platform, and, you know, that reads even worse than a lot of the Social Credit proposals I have been reading about or hearing about in Quebec over the last few months. I cannot remember exactly the figures, but they were rather unbelievable, if you added them up and tried to find out who would finance them. So I cannot take those statements too seriously.

Senator McElman: It's easy to commit, when you do not have to produce.

Hon. Mr. Lalonde: That is right.

Senator Cameron: Mr. Chairman, the minister indicated that in 1967 the cost of the old age pensions was roughly \$1 billion and that in 1973 it will be \$3 billion.