

ensions Act

the government has known for some months that it was going to raise the old age security pension by \$10 per month and that before the legislation was brought into the house there was no reason why the provinces could not have been approached by letter asking them if they were prepared to agree to a \$10 a month increase in the shared programs, so that all persons coming under these programs could enjoy the \$10 a month increase at the same time. The minister would then have been able to bring down all the legislation at the same time and treat all these recipients alike.

I object very strongly to the fact that again and again these most needy groups are cheated out of two months increase simply because they have to wait while the federal and provincial governments make up their minds.

Mr. Monteith: Could I ask the hon. member a question? When did this happen before? He has said this has happened again and again. When did it happen before?

Mr. Douglas: I would not want to say without checking the record but my recollection is that in 1951 there was a gap.

Mr. Monteith: I just want to make it clear that there was not in 1957 or 1962.

Mr. Douglas: The hon. member for Perth is quite right. There was not in 1957 or 1962. My recollection is that there was in 1951, but I would want to check the record before being categorical. At that time I had some responsibility in the matter and I remember the battle we waged. To the best of my recollection there was a gap then between the time when the old age security increase became effective, and the increase in the categorical shared program pensions became effective.

I am simply saying it is not good enough to have this gap between these two programs. If there is to be any gap at all it could more easily be justified the other way, but certainly these groups for whom we are legislating now should not be cheated out of two months pension increase just because the federal and provincial governments did not get together early enough to act promptly and to treat all pension groups alike.

I feel perfectly certain that if the provinces had been told at the federal-provincial conference that the government of Canada was going to introduce legislation making the increase in old age assistance pensions, blind pensions and disabled persons allowances effective as of October 1, and it would leave it to the provinces to come in when they chose to do so, most of the provinces would have elected to come in as of October 1. I do

[Mr. Douglas.]

not think there is any doubt about it. I wish that the government had taken its courage in its hands and simply made that perfectly clear to the provincial governments.

If the minister and the government are adamant and are not prepared to make October 1 the effective date, the very least they can do is to make the increase in allowable income retroactive to October 1 in order to deal with the kind of case referred to by the hon. member for Skeena where an individual has had her old age assistance pension reduced because her spouse has had an increase in the old age security pension. This would at least remove that kind of disparity. I offer that as a very mild concession but I hope the minister will go much further. Before the legislation passes through the committee I hope the minister will agree to change the effective date to October 1, and then use her very considerable influence with the provincial governments to make their payments retroactive to October 1. Some of the provinces may not be prepared to do so, but I hazard the guess that the great majority of them will welcome this move and will be prepared to pay their share of the pension back to October 1. I hope the minister will give this very careful consideration.

Clause agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

On clause 4—*Coming into force.*

Mr. Knowles: Is the minister going to respond, as I am sure in her heart she would like to, to the appeals which have been made to change the effective date to October instead of December? If it were in order for us on this side of the house to move an amendment to that effect we would do so, but as it involves the expenditure of public money we could hardly move such an amendment. But the minister could. Will she?

Mr. Barnett: I am sure many hon. members would be quite prepared to give the minister their solemn assurance at this time that, if she does accede to this request, when we return to our home provinces we will be quite prepared to deal with any objections which might be raised in our own areas to this particular move.

Miss LaMarsh: Mr. Chairman, I must say I have a great deal of sympathy with the request made by the last three hon. members who have spoken. But it must be appreciated that after the discussions in September, the week-long federal-provincial conference, and the consideration given to it by the Queen's ministers, this decision was taken in light of all the information available. It is not