

should have precedence over petty interests trying to evade a fair interpretation of this important social legislation.

There is another aspect of this question that I wish to bring to the attention of the house. Are not the provinces, particularly in this period of stress, already overburdened by the administration of laws coming under their immediate jurisdiction. Notwithstanding their sense of duty, their good will and their spirit of self-sacrifice, it is easy to understand that the arduous duties inherent to their particular functions require their undivided attention. Moreover are the provinces in a position to exercise the necessary supervision on exploiters of all sorts who frequently take advantage of our social legislation?

Personally, I know of no authority better qualified to examine applications for old age pension than our municipal councils. In many cases would not the assessment roll tell the true story about the indigence of an old person? Information could easily be secured from the population of towns and villages should the assessment roll fail to give an accurate account of the case. Therefore, under the circumstances, not only should municipal councils be consulted in the matter but they should pass over the applications for old age pensions and report to the authorities.

Mr. Speaker, we must put a stop to abuses, exploitation and injustice in the administration of the Old Age Pensions Act. We must prevent scoundrels from exploiting old destitute people and selfishly depriving them of their rights. It is the duty of the government to protect the treasury and to safeguard the interests of elderly people applying for the pension to which they are entitled.

Mr. JOSEPH NEEDHAM (The Battlefords): You must be thinking, Mr. Speaker, that by this time all that is necessary to be said has been said, and so I shall not take up many minutes prolonging this discussion. It is really interesting to follow the various speakers and the different points of view they bring out. I have no doubt the government will analyse the whole situation and perhaps evolve some practical solution on which to act, because unquestionably this is a pressing problem facing the country.

This government realizes, I am sure, as do all the provincial governments, that one of its first responsibilities is the care of the citizens whom it governs. The care of the aged should be its first and deepest concern. I am satisfied that as the years go on this problem will increase. There is no doubt that as people get on in years they will be replaced

more and more not only by youth but by machines. These old people must be cared for either by the federal government or by the provincial governments or by the municipalities in which they live. We see that during slack times many are laid off; then when there is a slight increase in employment the younger man gets the position and the older man cannot get back. In the discussion this afternoon many have expressed the view that the machine is one of the chief causes of this state of things. I agree with them. We read of more and more new machinery being set up, and its effect on the working population is tremendous. I believe we shall have to recognize the principle that where a machine takes the place of workers, that machine should in some way contribute to their support.

The late King George V on the morning of his jubilee appealed to the citizens of the British Empire to do all in their power to create employment and relieve the distress then prevalent. Two days before he gave that address there appeared in the Winnipeg papers the statement that the Bank of England had just laid off one thousand clerks, having put in machines to do the work. The ages of these clerks were between twenty-six and thirty-four, and the Bank of England recognized its obligation to those discharged employees and offered to give each of them either a lump sum of \$10,000 or \$10 a week as long as he lived. Seven hundred of them took the \$10,000; that amounted to \$7,000,000. The other three hundred took the \$10 a week for as long as they lived. According to British life insurance tables the average life expectancy of those three hundred men is thirty-seven years, so that in the thirty-seven years the bank will pay for those three hundred the sum of \$5,500,000. That is a total of \$12,500,000 to those discharged employees. There is a principle which I believe every government and every employer of labour who replaces his employees with machines must reckon with. It will be said that was a very generous gift, and it certainly was. What about the successors of these thousand employees? We must leave them out of the question. But this article went on to say that in nine years those machines saved to the Bank of England all they will pay out to these clerks in thirty-seven years. And in the thirty-seven years the saving to the bank will be \$32,950,000, placing the wages of the thousand employees at \$30 a week. So we see what the machine means to the employer. But there is a principle which must be recognized and dealt with in some way. When labour is replaced by the machine, I believe the government has a claim on the saving so made.