

Health and Welfare

[Text]

HEALTH AND WELFAREPROVISION OF MEDICAL AND DENTAL
CARE TO PENSIONERS**Mr. Gerard Laprise (Chapleau)** moved:

That in the opinion of this house, the government should give consideration to the advisability of providing all federal government pensioners with free medical, surgical, dental and ophthalmological care.

He said:

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to introduce this evening the following motion which is found on the order paper under No. 17, and reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should give consideration to the advisability of providing all federal government pensioners with free medical, surgical, dental and ophthalmological care.

Mr. Speaker, when I had this motion put on the order paper on May 17 last—which is quite a long time ago—my aim was then, as it is today, to make the house understand the anxiety of elderly people drawing a pension from the federal government, when they have to face ill health. The small pensions they receive hardly permit any savings. In many cases, when illness strikes, our old people just wait and hope to get over it. They persist in only calling a doctor at the last minute, to hear him say that it is now too late and that they should have called him earlier.

Mr. Speaker, it is because of the many letters I received from our old, blind and invalid people, and others, who have been struck by illness and have nothing but their meagre pension, that I introduced the present motion.

Some lucky people, as I would call them, claim that if the parties concerned do not have enough savings on retirement and have not provided for their old age, it is because they have spent too freely and have not saved enough. In reply, I would say that if Canadian citizens and especially our workers and farmers are unable to save for their old age, it is simply because they have to pay to the government in income tax and otherwise, throughout their lives, whatever they could have saved for their retirement.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we are making this request today and why the people of Canada ask that the government ensure medical security for the aged.

Everybody agrees that that small pension only helps older citizens to survive; it could not be their only source of income.

I feel that it is the duty of the national government to provide for the security of our

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

retired citizens who can count only on such government allowances to live.

If, as suggested in this motion, the government provided necessary care to people drawing a pension from the state, it would contribute a great deal to the banning of much misery and worry.

I hope the government will consider the motion with the greatest attention and understanding.

I know that the government is now discussing certain retirement plans for our older people. But the subject matter of this motion, that is some forms of illness should, because considerable medical expenses are perhaps more frequent in that age bracket, be the main concern of hon. members.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the motion will be agreeable to all the members and that the government, after having studied it exhaustively, will bring in, as soon as possible, the necessary readjustment.

The federal-provincial conference which has just come to a close has brought a glimmer of hope to our blind and disabled people, as well as to our senior citizens, as far as an increase in their pensions is concerned. But we hope that the government will go one step further and grant that assistance to our older citizens, without a means test, from age 65, and from age 60 in all other cases.

I would like to think that the government will continue to examine carefully the situation and that, together with the provinces, in an improved spirit of understanding and co-operation, it will find the means to give more adequate assistance to the disabled and the blind.

[Text]

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I think there are very few members in this house who are not in favour of measures to relieve hardship, especially hardship of people in the general category of pensioners. But while we all sympathize very much with the objectives of such a motion, as members of this house we have a responsibility to act according to measures which can be generally recognized as responsible measures.

The wording of this particular motive gives me a great deal of concern. It states:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should give consideration to the advisability of providing all federal government pensioners with free medical, surgical, dental and ophthalmological care.

If there ever was an omnibus resolution, this is one, and I would like to pay a little attention to the problem of definition. The motion refers to "all federal government pensioners." Just whom are we talking about?