

for indigent old age pensioners, we have come a long way in a comparatively short time. I could not deal with this subject without paying a real tribute to what has been done by local and provincial authorities in the development of a more adequate social welfare program. I would like now to make a brief examination of what has been done under the Federal responsibility and what the Federal Government has proposed in the further development of the program.

**OLD AGE PENSIONS**

In 1927 when the Old Age Pensions Act was passed it was regarded as a pioneering and progressive step.

The Act originally provided for a pension of \$20.00 a month with an outside maximum income allowable of \$125 a year apart from the pension. At that time the cost of Old Age Pensions was borne of a 50-50 basis between the Provinces and the Federal Government.

A later amendment in 1931 reduced the Provincial share of the cost to 25% and increased the Federal Government's share to 75%. The Act itself was first amended when a Government under the leadership of the present Prime Minister introduced amendments to extend the benefits of Old Age Pensions Legislation to the blind in 1937.

Since 1941, a number of provinces have been paying a supplemental allowance to pensioners in addition to the pension paid under the Old Age Pensions Act. These payments have ranged in amount from nothing at all in some Provinces to as much as \$10.00 in British Columbia.

In 1943, through Order-in-Council, the Government increased the maximum pension payable by \$5.00 and a few months later increased the maximum income allowable under the Act from \$365 to \$425 a year inclusive of pension.

With the exception of these changes, the Old Age Pensions Act today remains essentially the same as it was in 1927. There is no doubt of the desirability of increasing the amount of Old Age Pensions and the need for liberalizing the conditions under which it is paid. You will recall that the Speech from the Throne this year referred to the Government's intention to amend the Old Age Pension Act at the present session of Parliament. Only a week ago I had the honour of introducing in the House of Commons the resolution preliminary to the introduction of the Bill to amend the present Old Age Pension Act. While I cannot at this time give details of the proposed legislation, I can say that the Government has recognized the need for a revision of the scales of benefit presently provided for our aged and blind people.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

It is nearly six years since the Unemployment Insurance Act came into operation on July 1st, 1941. Since that time up to the end of 1946, total revenues from the joint contribution of employers, employees, and the Federal Government, amount to \$427,374,298. Benefits first became payable on the 27th January 1942 and from that date until the end of December, 1946 a total of 702,308 persons have received benefits in the amount of \$70,151,000.

Workers earning more than \$2400 a year are not covered under Unemployment Insurance. Nor are workers in certain specified industries or occupations such as agriculture, forestry, fishing.

While the introduction of Unemployment Insurance was undoubtedly a major step in progressive social legislation, the Canadian Government recognizes the necessities for extending the benefit to include workers who are not at present covered by its terms. I will refer later to the Government's objectives in this direction.