

would move the wheels of industry for the manufacture of more goods; in fact I am satisfied that every community, every constituency in Canada would directly benefit by a scheme of this kind.

In conclusion, I desire to read part of the report which was submitted by the veterans' assistance commission, which consisted of Colonel Rattray, Lieut-Col. de Martigny and Mr. Robert Macnicol. On page 36 the commission has this to say upon the subject of old age pensions:

Old age pensions are now dominion wide. Although administration is under the control of the provinces, and to that extent variable, there is little in the working of the present act that is open to criticism. We feel, however, that it is time there was a thorough revision of the basis upon which this act rests.

We trust that in making these observations we shall not be accused of exceeding the bounds of our inquiry. The interests of the veteran are tied up with the interests of the body of citizenry at large and are affected to an equal degree by any short-coming of general social legislation.

We feel that the age at which the old age pension is available is too high. In view of the intensity of modern industrial conditions and the greater speed of all our life, the man who has reached the age of sixty-five is entitled to a period of rest. Not only is he entitled to it, but there is an excellent chance that it will be forced on him. As we have already observed, few industries will now employ a man over the age of fifty, and most industries are weeding out their men at sixty-five. Tradesmen also usually slow up when they get to that age. Although we believe in the reality of the pre-aging of those who saw active service, we feel most insistently that a very large number of older civilians are doomed by present legislation to a mere existence for a space of years on the charity of relatives and friends.

If the age limit at which old age pensions are available were reduced to sixty-five, this would eliminate much social distress while at the same time making room for younger people. But the greatest fault in the present old age pension law is its restrictiveness. It is confined to the indigent and to that extent serves as a reward for indigence. In effect it tells the citizens of Canada that if they have been reckless in their expenditures, careless of the future and slothful in their daily affairs, the state will reward them at the age of seventy with a pension; but if they have been industrious, sober and careful of their resources, the state will tax them at the age of seventy for the support of those who have been indigent. Nothing could be more calculated to discourage thrift and encourage thriftlessness than such a law. The only escape from this dilemma is for the state to pension everyone at the age of seventy, or at the age of sixty-five as the case may be, and put these pensions on some contributory basis.

[Mr. Marshall.]

The Dominion of Canada does not inquire of its civil servants when they reach the age of superannuation whether they are millionaires or paupers; it pensions them all on the same basis. It may be argued that this is merely a retirement plan to which the civil servant has contributed. Why should not the old age pension be the same?

In conclusion, may I say this, that we have been labouring under the economics of scarcity too long. It is about time we planned our economy to distribute the abundance which lies around us everywhere and which a bountiful Providence has bestowed upon us.

Mr. LIGUORI LACOMBE (Laval—Two Mountains (Translation): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the humane object of the resolution presented by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Heaps) I do not at this time feel like supporting it. I think we would be better advised to look first into the grievances voiced by old people in some parts of the country.

The dominion government, contributing seventy-five per cent of old age pensions, has not only the right, but the imperative duty to see that the law is administered on a sound basis. Before considering any amendment concerning the age limit of old people, good administration of the act must be assured. The guiding principle in the distribution of old age pensions ought to be a high sense of justice, regardless of any other motive. Undue preference and favouritism must yield to legitimate requests and to the needs of our old people. Further, the administration of this act appears to be so difficult that any amendment with a view to fixing another age limit would result in making conditions worse. I realize that it is not always easy to judge the case of an applicant on its merit. This task is all the more difficult as there seems to be a conspiracy on the part of certain applicants in order to get a pension to which they are not entitled under the act. Thousands of dollars could be saved through preventing abuses. I would suggest to the dominion government the appointment of revising officers or inspectors, even if the only purpose of saving public money could thus be served. These officers would look after serious complaints and report doubtful cases and abuses to the proper authorities. An important part of their work should consist in supervising the administration and operation of the Old Age Pensions Act.

In all fairness to the population of this country, those applying for old age pension should comply with the provisions of the act. On the other hand, justice and law