

minister will recall that on a previous occasion he said he would look into the situation to see what could be done.

Often a physician will send in a report indicating that an individual is disabled. When that report reaches Ottawa it is considered and often sent back with an indication that the man is not disabled for the purposes of the Canada Pension Plan. The minister will recall that in the case of appeals from such decisions, about 40 per cent are allowed and pensions are granted, particularly following examination and confirmation of the general practitioner's findings by a specialist. This fact by itself would indicate that something is seriously wrong with the system of communication between the examining doctor and the people here in Ottawa. I suggest that these people should make more use of the telephone when there is a point in question. I have asked doctors on many occasions why they did not telephone Ottawa to straighten out the differences and have been informed that they did not know to whom to telephone.

One is amazed how far it is from the city of Toronto or the city of Orillia to Ottawa when it comes to straightening out these matters of opinion. Many of these people who are academics and well educated do not know where to phone. This is something that might be passed on to the medical staff here in Ottawa. When there is a matter of doubt, instead of going through all this redtape, writing letters back and forth, these people should pick up the telephone and get a little action.

● (1650)

Let us take the example of a disabled person. He does not receive an examination immediately. I do not know whether the minister has ever checked to find out how long these people wait before they are examined. They might wait a month. The report is then made. It remains in Ottawa for a while and the application is either rejected or approved. If it should be rejected, the person immediately sees his doctor and perhaps his federal member of parliament. He points out that he should not have been turned down. He asks why he was turned down. The doctor states that he should not have been turned down because he is a sick man and unable to work. Then, the doctor writes to the department and the decision is made to have a specialist see this person. That is fine, but let us consider the length of time that elapses between the time it is decided a specialist must see him and the time when the people here agree and he receives the examination.

The point I am making is that months and months of bitter frustration are involved. Such a person is not treated fairly and squarely. Many of these people are helpless. They may not have had a good education and depend on their family doctor who is busy and often cannot see them. They also sometimes depend on their member of parliament or on someone else. Perhaps the matter might be resolved in this way. The family doctor and the Canada Manpower office in the area could certify that the person is unemployable. Why should such a person not receive the Canada Pension? Why do we have this difficulty in respect of the term "totally and permanent disabled"? Is a person not totally and permanently disabled if he is unable to earn a living?

Canada Pension Plan (No. 2)

I recall seeing a person one night who had been turned down for a disability pension. The grounds are about the same. He came in the door to meet me and I did not think he would make it to his seat. His feet were swollen up and he was short of breath. It had been decided that this person was able to get around and look after himself. In a fashion he could do this, but one might wonder who bought the food, clothing and other things that were needed at home. I was concerned about his case and immediately called Ottawa. When I advised what shape this person was in his application was approved, but this situation had gone on for two years.

I bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, that there must be easier ground rules in respect of determining whether or not a person is eligible for the Canada Pension. I know the minister will agree that if a man is unemployable and cannot earn a cent, he is entitled to the Canada Pension on the grounds of disability. We should cut out the tremendous amount of red tape and a great deal of the bureaucracy.

The other point I wish to bring up is that I believe the Canada Pension should be available to people, probably at age 60 if they are disabled. I believe that a person who is beyond age 65 should work if he is physically able to do so. This is especially true of professional people because a great deal of money is tied up in their brains and their ability. It is difficult to replace these people. Replacements may be available now, but the minister will realize that, as a result of the falling birth rate, we will soon have a situation in Canada where there will be four million people over age 65. How many of these people will there be in the work force? This is a problem which puzzles me.

I believe the minister should be giving some leadership in the field of geriatrics and health. I hope the minister will give leadership in the development of a geriatric department in every hospital in the same way there are paediatric departments. The other day I was astounded to notice a statistic published by a very honoured person from the province of Quebec, Dr. Gingras, who was president of the CMA a year ago. He made the statement that there are some 800 paediatricians in Canada and about five million or six million persons under the age of 16. He said also that there are 1,700,000 people over age 65 and that we have only 24 geriatricians. I think we should consider allowing these people to draw the pension after age 60 or age 65, and those who are disabled should be allowed to do so at a younger age. Unfortunately, people do become disabled at much younger ages than 60. The greatest disabler today is the accident. Many of the people involved in accidents need attention.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the