

you like," and they all one by one came in, and I do not think they would wait so long on this occasion.

If the minister would allow me one other criticism, he did not give any weight to this fact, that a large amount of that increased old age pension would be paid to people who would otherwise be on relief, anyhow; they have to be kept; they are at our door; they are starving or at starvation point; we have to deal with them, and we do deal with them. Several of the provinces adopt what is now a popular idea; they say, "We have balanced the budget," and they add in a lower voice, "all except relief," which is two or three or five million dollars. But we have to meet that problem some time, and we might as well meet it—I think it is best that we should meet it—by giving a larger class of people old age pensions rather than by putting them on relief. A man of sixty-five may be willing and able to work; but he cannot get work, and there is only one alternative—relief. Is it not better to hand out national money in the form of an extended pension than by way of relief?

With any proposal to reduce the age, and indeed even though the minister cannot see his way to reduce the age at the present time, should go very definite steps towards putting on a fair basis the existing act and existing regulations. The act is all right so far as it goes. The regulations are not impossible, but it is the variety of contradictory and unfair interpretations which are put upon them by the various governing boards in the different provinces that make the trouble.

The minister has said, "We cannot compel the provinces to follow regulations that we suggest to them; we must get them to agree." The man who pays the piper can always set the tune. When we are paying seventy-five per cent of a given expenditure, it is always open to us in the future as in the past—we did it ten years ago—to say, "You will conform to these standard regulations as you have to conform to the standard act or you will not get anything." I believe the dominion government has very largely the power, if it chooses to exercise it, to effect a more uniform and more reasonable interpretation of the regulations. The minister dealt broadly with this, so I think it is pertinent to the subject to allude to what I frankly call the rotten interpretations which have been put upon the regulations not only in the province I come from but in other provinces. In British Columbia we have the Parents' Maintenance Act, which compels children to maintain their parents. Prior to some three or four years

[Mr. Neill.]

ago—they have now stopped the worst feature—the British Columbia managing board said to the old man or woman, "Go and sue your child or children. We will not give you any pension; we will not consider giving you any pension until you have produced an order from a competent court to say that the child is unable to support his parents." I have in my possession a letter in which they definitely say, "We will not give that man an old age pension unless he sues his child." I went and saw the child and found that he was living on six dollars a month relief. I admit that the British Columbia board has been shamed into abandoning that feature of their manoeuvres, but they are doing it just as badly in a roundabout way. They say, "Oh well, we are sorry, but the regulation now says we must take into account contributions by children." Here is the wording of it:

—which may reasonably be expected to be made by them.

Perfectly proper language, surely. But how do they interpret it? They interpret it in this way: They say, "This man has three children. He can reasonably expect to receive so much money from each of them. Therefore we will not give the old man (or woman) a pension." But somebody comes along and says, "Yes, but the children are not able to contribute. The son has a family of five children, and if he is not on relief he is drawing only a small wage. The second child is an invalid, and the third is on relief; therefore they are not able to support their parents." Obviously they cannot. But what does the board reply—and I have letters which confirm my statement—"We do not care anything about that. All we know is that this parent might 'reasonably be expected' to receive so much from that child, or those children, and therefore we will not give him a pension." They do not say any more, "Go and sue your child"; they simply leave it in that position, and the pension is withheld. They should grant the pension, and in the odd case of children able to support their parents and neglecting to do so, the board itself should sue the children.

I desire to touch on only some of the worst features. Another of the regulations is that in valuing the property of an applicant who does not have any income—if he receives any income he is, quite properly, charged with it—he shall be regarded as having an income equal to five per cent of its value. On the face of it that may seem just, but the way it works is extremely unjust. A lot of us in British Columbia bought land in the days when optimism was very flamboyant; we have the land and cannot pay taxes on it, and we