

The Address—Mr. Hanna

a natural extension of the government's old age security program which was so necessary, and has proved so successful. The province of Alberta, from which I come, is one of the provinces that have recently enacted such legislation. But the provincial act has one serious shortcoming. That is, it subjects Canadians from other provinces to a very restrictive residence clause—ten years, to be exact. That is perhaps inevitable, when such legislation is handled strictly on a provincial basis. Just before I came down here I had representation from a very fine citizen of 63 years of age who had come from one of the maritime provinces. He has resided for the past eight years in Alberta and is now totally incapacitated for work. He cannot qualify for assistance in Alberta because under the provincial act ten years' residence is required. Neither can he return to the province from which he came. As a Canadian this person is entitled, I believe, to assistance. It is too bad that it is denied him simply because he found it necessary to move from one province to another. We will never promote Canadian unity and Canadian solidarity by legislation of this kind.

We must realize more and more in this great country that we are all Canadians above everything else. As Canadians we should all be treated alike, no matter in which province we choose to live. That is why I hope this piece of legislation will be passed by this house with the minimum of delay.

And while I am on this subject I would like to put in a word for our friends, the blind persons of Canada. While these physically handicapped people are now receiving an allowance, it is subject to a rigorous means test that is working great hardship. I am informed that as a result of this means test a single blind person in receipt of blindness allowance is allowed a total income, including the blindness allowance, of only \$840 per year, while a married person is limited to \$1,320 per year. Surely, in this day and age such incomes are far too low.

I believe that if the means test is removed these handicapped, but otherwise excellent citizens, will not only be able to maintain a decent standard of living, but they will be given an incentive to become productive tax-paying citizens. These people, through their organizations, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the Canadian Council of the Blind, have presented their case to the government, and I urge that it get every possible consideration.

There is one other matter in this respect to which I would ask the government to give early and favourable consideration, namely, the brief of the Canadian Legion on behalf

of the recipients of war veterans allowance. In this case I am convinced that the allowance is too low when the high cost of living is taken into consideration. I also suggest that, although those unfortunate people are in need of assistance, many of them are quite capable of taking occasional small jobs to help them maintain a decent standard of living. Even at \$60 a month for single veterans and \$120 a month for married veterans, these people would not be able to enjoy very many extras. It is for this reason that I suggest that greater latitude should be allowed in permissible income from casual earnings. Not only will such additional casual income make life more liveable for these people; it will add to their incentive to contribute to the national economy by performing odd jobs, for which they may be suited. We must realize that although these people are unable to make their own way in life unassisted, there are many duties they can perform from time to time, and we should in no wise stand in their way. These men and women all stood by Canada in her hour of need, and we must not fail them in their declining years, and in a time of Canada's greatest national prosperity.

I think the government should also consider whether it can possibly do something to raise the pensions of retired civil servants, and retired railway employees, who are trying to subsist on pensions that bear little or no relation to today's cost of living. These people contributed to their respective retirement funds all that was asked of them in the days when their dollars were worth much more than they are today. Now when they are at the stage where they have to try to live on an income based on the pre-war dollar, they find it cannot be done.

Now all this may seem like a tall order for the government. However, all these groups that I have mentioned should have some share in the increased national output of Canada, to which they have all contributed in one way or another in earlier years.

I am very glad that the government has seen fit to increase the pay of the civil service and the armed forces. By so doing the government has recognized the inescapable fact that it must compete with private enterprise to get the best type of men and women into its service. All hon. members I am sure recognize that if the rate of reward is below the average obtainable outside, the government service will not attract the type of men and women that Canada needs to do its business, and to man its armed forces at home and abroad.

I would now like to deal briefly with a subject that I do not think has been mentioned in this debate so far. I refer to the