

ister of Finance and by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, I refer to the annuity system organized a few years ago by the then Minister of Trade and Commerce, the Right Hon. Sir Richard Cartwright. I wish to refer hon. members to the very able and substantial speech delivered on that occasion in the Senate by Sir Richard in presenting his Bill. He made one of the best exposés of the annuities system ever made in any parliament. The annuities system has been working fairly well since its establishment in Canada. I fear, however, that it has not been advertised as it should have been by the authorities of both the late and the present government. There were, I think, ten or twelve lecturers to explain to the people of Canada how to practise thrift in a very economical way indeed. The annuity system is, after all, the system which obtains on the continent of Europe. In France they have tried to establish the old age pension system but it has come to be a complete fiasco. The system which obtains in France to-day is that of the annuity system. They established 25 or 30 years ago La Société des Prévoyants de l'Avenir. They have had such success that the government have had to intervene and divide the profits among the more recent members of the society. The annuity system has not had the success in Canada that it should have obtained. It is an excellent system and the best means of educating our people to thrift and economy.

I am sorry that the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Foster), should have dispensed with the services of the lecturers. I know that he thought he was administering his department on safe lines in transferring this system to the Post Office Department. In England the postmasters are the agents of the government for the payment of the old age pensions, but I am sorry that, after having transferred the annuity branch to the Post Office Department, the government should not have thought proper to continue the employment of lecturers, either the old officials or new ones, to explain to the people the workings of the system. Reading over the Annuities Act it takes some time to understand its workings. The different systems embodied in the Annuities Act have to be explained carefully to the people so that they may understand the advantages of one plan over the other. It takes an expert to explain to the people the workings of the annuity system. The country and city postmasters have too much business to attend to of a very practical nature to have time to explain one by one to the applicants the workings of the various plans in connection with the annuities system. You must have agents or lecturers to explain to the labour societies, and the various

bodies who take an interest in these matters, just how this system is worked. I hope, therefore, that whilst we may gather important and valuable information as regards old age pensions, the government will in the meanwhile do a little more to propagate the system of annuities. It is an excellent system when one understands it. Do you imagine that the various insurance companies, like the Sun Life or Canada Life, are satisfied with advertising in the newspapers that they have head offices in Montreal and Toronto, and are ready to receive the applications of the various people who wish for insurance policies? No, they have active agents, and you know how many agents are after you in a year's time. You find them everywhere, in the cities, in the villages; nearly every notary or doctor in my own native province is an agent for some insurance company. I would urge upon the government the necessity of spending a little more money in getting proper agents for the propagation of the annuity system. I am quite sure that the various plans would be found so advantageous for the people that, after a while, the Minister of Trade and Commerce would be in a position to show a larger increase than ever in the number of applicants.

Mr. BURNHAM. Have the various insurance companies any system of annuities?

Mr. LEMIEUX. Some of them have systems of annuities, but they are not as cheap, and, in the minds of the people at large, not as safe as the government annuity system. The very fact that it is a government annuity system is of itself an advertisement, and an inducement to bring the people to accept it.

Mr. FOSTER (Toronto). I do not wish at this time to go into the discussion of the main question, but only to touch on a point or two made by my hon. friend from Rouville (Mr. Lemieux) with reference to the annuity system. It may not be necessary, but just for fear it is, I wish to correct one or two of what seem to be misapprehensions with reference to the action of the government in this matter. In the first place, neither am I nor is the government of which I am a member, opposed to the annuities system. And in the second place, anything that has been done has been done with no other idea than that of making possible a continuous and progressive working of that system.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Are you enthusiastic?

Mr. FOSTER (Toronto). I have some enthusiasms left yet; and this not one of the least of them, perhaps. Another im-