

Canada Assistance Plan

appeared in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* of Saturday, June 25, which reads in part as follows:

Elderly Prince Edward Islanders will find an extra \$75 in this month's old age pension cheques—

The article goes on to say:

A \$25-monthly increase "has already been implemented, retroactive to April 1", the premier said in an interview.

I think this is a most forward-looking step. The minister was questioned in this regard in the house by the hon. member for Grey-Bruce (Mr. Winkler), who suggested that he relent somewhat in regard to his position on old age security pensions. At that time the minister replied:

Mr. Speaker, the position taken by the premier of Prince Edward Island is made possible or will be made possible through the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan.

I would congratulate the minister on his forthrightness.

• (5:30 p.m.)

I think he might give the house a little additional information on this matter. Is the article correct when it implies that all the old age pensioners in Prince Edward Island obtained a \$25 increase; was it made retroactive for all of them and is this the pattern that will be set through the Canada Assistance Plan throughout all the provinces? I hope it is so and I hope, although it is not spelled out in the plan, the needs of the old age security pensioners will be met through the plan, as was suggested earlier and as was also suggested during the election campaign in Prince Edward Island.

Many people have been concerned about the gap in time that will occur between the passing of the legislation, and the time needed for consultations with the provinces prior to its actual implementation. However, we wonder whether every province will be able to put all of its old age security pensioners in the category of those in need. I think it would be very much to the advantage of each province to move rapidly in this regard, to receive assistance from the federal government and to have it made retroactive to April 1 across the country. It does strike me as a most humane and enlightened way of implementing the Canada Assistance Plan, as Mr. Baetz suggested in his speech.

I wish to make one or two other points about the need for some sort of guarantee of old age security payments. Several articles

have appeared recently in Ontario newspapers concerning people such as David Freeman, 21 years of age, an enterprising cerebral palsy victim whose disabled pension was docked because he sold a \$400 magazine article; and Robert Hannah, 24, an ex-soldier crippled for life in a car accident, whose pension was stopped because his sweetheart married him and brought home her \$38 a week calendar factory pay. These stories dealt with young people who ran into a less than enlightened treatment of their disability pension.

A case has recently been brought to my attention in my own constituency, and I wrote to the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Teillet) regarding it. This concerns an old age security pensioner who is not getting his \$75 a month war veterans allowance, but only \$65 a month because he married very late in life and the district office discovered that owing to the way in which the plan had been administered for some time he had been receiving an overpayment. Although he received a letter from the district office admitting that it must accept responsibility for having made such an overpayment on his war veterans allowance account, he has been assessed the task of repaying that money.

The old age security pension which he is receiving is his only source of income, which makes the repayment very difficult for him. This case illustrates the fact that even the \$75 that pensioners are receiving is not a guaranteed sum. I really do not see how a department of the government dealing with old age security pensions can be held responsible for the errors made by another department. I suggest there is a great need for some guarantee against the subjection of old age pensioners to this type of harassment where a mistake has been made by one of the government offices, which then has to be corrected by the old age security branch of the government.

I am also concerned about Mr. Baetz' comment that the plan will work if it is implemented in an enlightened way, because there have been too many examples—and the hon. member for Mégantic (Mr. Langlois) has spoken of some—showing that the present plans have not been administered in a particularly enlightened fashion. In administering his new plan the minister will have to use the same personnel even though he will be augmenting their number. I believe that in some cases the need will arise for some action