

*Social Development Ministry*

will probably carry, but I say on behalf of our party that we think it is a mistake.

There are things to do. There are many senior citizen organizations in this country which feel that in terms of their interests if there is going to be another body, another ministry or another department, it ought to be a special one for senior citizens and that they ought to have a minister who is concerned exclusively about them, their needs and their rights. This is something which has been presented to the government so often that at least the Minister of National Health and Welfare has responded by setting up a special division in her department which is concerned about aging and the needs of older people. However, the point I am making is that that is the kind of direction in which we should move, if we should move at all, and that is setting up departments concerned about the particular needs of people, not a 50 or 60-person bureaucracy that is going to cut back on what they need.

In terms of senior citizens, we have done well by getting the pension way up and by getting the age down to 65. We have done well in the establishing of senior citizens' housing and in the grants which are made under the New Horizons program. But, as I say, there are still many improvements which need to be made in our pension programs. We need to get over the notion that all a person needs when he retires is a pittance, enough to keep body and soul together. We need to establish the concept that a person who has done his share of this world's work for 30 or 40 years has just as much right to his share of the wealth being produced when he is retired as the others. We need to get over some of our silly notions about women, such as the notion that their pensions should be half what the pension of the husband would be. We need to get over some of our silly notions about women not having entitlement to pensions because of their work in the home. These things are going to cost money. If we interpose into the situation a bureaucracy the purpose of which is to allocate expenses and cut things down, we will have far more trouble than if we leave it to a department which is concerned about these things and which will try to push them forward.

The same is true of the Department of Veterans Affairs. In the earlier years what we did met the bill, but there are needs now which are very pressing. Our veterans are older, and they need not just enough pension money or enough treatment to keep them alive; they need the best break we can possibly give them. The veterans themselves are becoming far more concerned about their potential widows today than they used to be because many of them are either on no disability pension at all or on disability pensions below 48 per cent, with the result that their widows will not qualify for pensions under the Pension Act. This is something which has to be pushed. It has been hard enough to get as far as we have come but, as I say, if we throw into the mix another bureaucracy the purpose of which is to say how much this department can have in terms of money and personnel, that is just going to slow the whole process down.

I have already mentioned the good work which is being done in the Department of Veterans Affairs to try to meet the

conditions of older veterans. I know they are working on the War Veterans Allowance Act, a piece of legislation which needs, in the worst way, to be updated. It was brought in back in about 1930 as a service parallel to the old age pension of that day. The old age pension of that day was \$20 a month payable at age 70 with a means test. The war veterans allowance was a little more, about \$30 a month payable a few years younger but also with a means test. The result was that the veteran who could not establish a war disability could at least get something comparable to what the civilian could get, only a little better. Although the basic old age security pension today is without any means test—it is universal—the basic amount of the war veterans allowance is still subject to a means test. In my view that has to be changed. We have to move in the direction of a guaranteed annual income for veterans who have reached a certain age.

I am just throwing out some ideas which happen to be in my mind, but I know they are thought about and talked about in the Department of Veterans Affairs. That department is just as interested in advancing the welfare of veterans as any of us on the floor of this House, but the department now has the trouble that it has to sell its idea to the minister. That is the easiest part. The minister has to sell it to his cabinet colleagues. He has to sell it to the Treasury Board. He has to sell it to the Privy Council office. He has to get the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on his side, and now here is another bureaucracy stuck in between. He has to sell it to that bureaucracy too, and that bureaucracy is running around saying "no" to everybody else. I think it is a gross error.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration is another case. He is not one who has yet become the favourite minister to hon. members on this side of the House, but he has a pretty important job in terms of creating employment and training. This sort of thing costs money and calls for ideas. However, in addition to the Treasury Board, the Privy Council and all the others, he has to face this additional bureaucracy, which will tell him, "No, we do not have enough money in the envelope; you cannot have it".

● (1640)

That is why we are opposed to the motion. We do not think it does what the nice words in it say it is for. We do not think it is a move to advance the cause of social development. We think it is an underhanded way of providing an excuse for cutting back on expenditures on social programs, and that is why we do not like it.

I should like to add one other word. The hon. member for Rosedale, in that delightful speech of his in which he took us all back 20 years, said that the immediate effect of this resolution will be confusion. I know that in our own caucus we have a critic on pensions—guess who he is—we have a critic on health—and he is the boy who was in grade three 20 years ago—and then we have a critic on social policy who says to me, "After you fellows get through with pensions and health programs, what is there left for me?" We managed to sort it out. This does create confusion for us, but we know how to sort