

two successive years cannot be heard to say in the same breath, "we cannot take care of our old age pensioners."

Look at your cost of living bonuses. They are not applied on a basis of necessity. It does not matter what the wage rate is, the cost of living bonus goes with it, and millions, yes, hundreds of millions of dollars directly and indirectly have been paid out as cost of living bonuses. A nation which can do that cannot be heard to say that they cannot take care of their old age pensioners. It does not add up to common sense.

On the question of whether or not we should treat the old age pension as a provincial and not a federal responsibility, that attitude has been repudiated by Liberalism ever since 1908. Technically old age pensions may come within a strict interpretation of subsections 7 and 13 of section 92 of the British North America Act. But I, speaking as a lawyer, could never believe that anybody had any right in an old age pension in 1867 in any colony, or had any property interest in it. There was no such thing in existence in 1867, either in reality or in the minds of the fathers of confederation, when the term "property and civil rights" was written into our statute. Subsection 7, which deals with charity and hospitals and asylums and eleemosynary institutions, is not in my opinion broad enough to include an institution such as old age pensions, which entirely reverses the attitude toward people of old age. We did away with the poorhouse; we did away with charity, and we established a federal act under which people took a contribution from the state not as a matter of charity, not as a matter of gift, but as a matter of right under the letter of the law. But we have accepted it as provincial.

Let me refer to a little bit of history, and I will not take very long. In 1908 Sir Wilfrid Laurier moved the first resolution in the House of Commons of Canada to investigate the subject of old age pensions. The Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux was Minister of Labour, and that year he appointed Mr. Blue, dominion statistician, Professor Shortt and Mr. Mackenzie King to prepare some evidence which would be valuable. As a matter of fact, old age pensions disappeared with the defeat of the Liberal administration in 1911, but it was a tremendously active subject in England during those years, and it appeared in "Industry and Humanity," written by the present Prime Minister and published in 1918. I have found that book one which every minister of finance should read. I just want to give one quotation from it. He points out that debt binds health as it binds freedom—

and it is in this attitude of the minister who tells us that we can finance with ease, if we can keep up our national income, an enormous increase in our debt and who at the same time tells us the granting of a reasonable allowance to our old age pensioners is going to cripple our war effort.

Mr. ILSLEY: I did not say that.

Mr. McGEER: You did not?

Mr. ILSLEY: No.

Mr. McGEER: Well, just a minute. You sometimes do not realize what you do say. Here is what you said:

But why grind at the dominion government all the time, with its terrific burdens, and with its deficit of two or three billion? Why drive us, or make it almost impossible for us to carry on at all?

We were not dealing with anything but old age pensions when you made that statement.

Mr. ILSLEY: I think we were dealing with other things.

Mr. McGEER: Oh, no, you were not.

Mr. ILSLEY: At any rate I did not use the words, "cripple our war effort."

Mr. McGEER: Well, I apologize. I will simply give you the words you did say, which I think are stronger than that.

Mr. ILSLEY: Well, you did that.

Mr. McGEER:

Why drive us, or make it impossible for us to carry on at all.

We were driving you then to give the old age pensioners a decent living subsistence allowance, which they were not given.

Mr. ILSLEY: I think I was talking about the general attitude of wanting the dominion government to do everything in time of war.

Mr. McGEER: Maybe you were.

Mr. ILSLEY: I meant to, anyway.

Mr. McGEER: At any rate, the minister was emphasizing the danger which was coming over the land if he was called upon to meet this old age pension liability.

That was the start of it. In 1919 the Liberal convention met, and we passed as part of our platform the old age pension policy. In 1921 the province of British Columbia requested the government to establish old age pensions. In 1922 J. E. Fontaine, the member for Hull, moved

that, in the opinion of this house the dominion government should consider the advisability of devising ways and means for the establishment of a system of old age pensions in Canada.