

Disabled Persons Act

Mr. Pearson: Why of course; we always permit questions.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Is the hon. gentleman not aware of the fact that 75 per cent of the income tax payers of Canada pay less income tax today than they did?

Mr. Pearson: Wait until I read what the Prime Minister said. He said that all of the changes that he had been speaking about and these extra benefits had been secured without any increase in taxes. I know that to my hon. friends who deal in billions of deficits, \$213 million of an increase in one year is peanuts, but still—

Mr. Pigeon: "Peanuts", what do you mean? Do you think your party is peanuts?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, that opens up a new and interesting sort of avenue of exploration which I will not go into at the moment because I do not want to take an undue amount of time.

Mr. Pickersgill: Leave it to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Pearson: When the Prime Minister was dealing with the adequacy of what had been done by the Liberal administration compared to the adequacy of what was being done by his government in respect of social security payments, he must expect to be judged by the test which he established himself in regard to adequacy. This test was established once and for all—he cannot escape this test—when he said in an election campaign on April 25, 1957, a Conservative government would set the payments high enough to meet the needs.

An hon. Member: Right.

Mr. Pearson: Is my hon. friend trying to tell me that \$65 is enough to meet the needs?

Mr. Monteith (Perth): It is a lot better than \$46.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): It is \$19 a month more than you were paying.

Mr. Pallett: Does the Leader of the Opposition disagree with that principle?

Mr. Pearson: Of course, I disagree. What is the need of a disabled man? What is the need of a blind man? Is it \$55 or \$65?

Mr. Pigeon: It is not \$46.

Mr. Pearson: The pension plan we on this side are putting forward is a basic pension plan for old age, for disability, for blindness, on which there will be raised a contributory plan which will add to that basic plan. It is never enough to meet the needs of all people. We have this principle exemplified very well in the resolution before us. We are talking

about disability allowances which are being paid out of taxation on a basis to be established, but on which there could also be established a disability pension out of a contributory scheme by which a man who suffers disability and who qualifies under that scheme will be able to add to his basic pension.

This is the philosophy we adopt in respect of old age pensions, too. This, Mr. Chairman, is the best way to do it and that is the path we on this side propose to follow. We accept a basic minimum, and on that basic minimum we will add a pension out of contributions to be made by those who benefit from the pension fund.

We have been committed to that principle, Mr. Chairman, since January, 1958, and on the eve of an election, as is our duty, we submit to the people of this country the details, not all the details but the details, as to how that commitment can be carried out. The people of this country will know what we propose to do. What will they know about the government's contributory scheme? All they will know is that in some way at some time this government will ask the provinces for a constitutional amendment to make possible a contributory pension scheme to be added on at some date.

Mr. Monteith (Perth): We have asked; not "at some time".

Mr. Pearson: Hon. gentlemen have had four years, nearly five years to approach the provinces in respect of this matter and they do it in January, 1962. In doing it, Mr. Chairman, they accept, apparently without question, that the federal government can do nothing in regard to a contributory pension scheme without a constitutional amendment. We do not accept that. We know quite well that so far as survivors benefits are concerned and disability allowances as well, there will have to be consultations and approval of a constitutional change.

Mr. Monteith (Perth): You admit it now. The hon. member for Essex East would not admit it.

Mr. Pearson: My hon. friend is getting a little heated.

Mr. Monteith (Perth): My hon. friend from Essex East would not admit it.

Mr. Chevrier: The minister has been asleep for four years.

Mr. Pigeon: You have been asleep.

Mr. Chevrier: Pipe down, Mortimer Snerd.

The Chairman: Order. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor it would be helpful if hon. members would refrain from making interjections from their seats.