

*The Address—Mr. Crestohl*

be required particularly to interpret sympathetically the documents and evidence submitted in support of applications which they will be called upon to consider. I am, for example, concerned with the fact that many of the applicants may not be in possession of birth certificates, particularly those applicants who were born in countries whose records were destroyed in the European holocaust, or records which are in the possession of countries where they are not accessible. I was happy to hear the minister constantly repeat on the floor of the house that every reasonable form of evidence as to age will be accepted. This is the humane approach, and I have every confidence that he will cause to penetrate to his administrative staff the same qualities in dealing with the applicants.

In speaking of administrative staff, I should like to say that we have indeed a most efficient and devoted civil service who hold and well merit the confidence of the people of Canada. They seem, however, to have classified themselves in two categories, the civil servant with an affirmative approach and the civil servant with a negative approach. I should like to illustrate something which is perhaps well known to almost every member of the house. John Citizen walks into the office of an official who promptly fixes in his mind that this man is looking for something and the official says to himself, "Now, what does he want?" He listens carefully and promptly turns up the regulation to indicate why the request cannot be granted. That is the negative minded civil servant.

Then there is the affirmative minded civil servant who, as he sees John Citizen walking into his office, allows himself the charitable thought, "There goes John Citizen, he must have a problem, he requires some assistance; I am his obedient servant, let me see what I can do to help him." He listens to the problem as did the other gentleman and he too reaches out for the book of regulations, but he finds something in the act to offer some measure of relief, if not totally at least partially. He speaks to John Citizen with a smile on his face and offers to help him as much as he is able to. That is the affirmative minded civil servant. It is my prayerful hope, therefore, that only civil servants who are affirmative minded will be charged with the administration of this act.

In all humility I should like to say that, because it was my privilege for many years to serve as the honorary secretary of the Montreal Hebrew old people's sheltering home, I acquired some little knowledge of the problems which people of advanced years present, and I therefore appeal to those who will administer the act to regard the

documents which they see before them not as cold type, not just as another file or another file number, but to understand the messages which these documents are intended to convey, and above all to remember that behind each document is at least 70 years of human life, loyalty, devotion and no doubt much suffering, which now pleads for gentle treatment at the hands of civil servants and pleads for a peaceful old age. If a country has the government it deserves, a minister too has the staff he deserves. This humane minister cannot, therefore, be surrounded by other than a most sympathetic administrative staff, and we can have every confidence that this act will be dealt with in the spirit of the minister himself. The people of Canada can ask for nothing better or more reassuring.

I should like nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, to say a word about the means test which has been eliminated at age 70 but retained between the ages of 65 and 69. I, for one, do not approve the dual classification allowing a pension at age 65 with a means test and at age 70 without a means test. There is a discomfoting paradox in the situation. If a person requires a pension at age 65 and files his application, he should not be humbled by a means test any more than a person who files his application at age 70. There will be thousands of affluent Canadians of age 70 and over who will not file applications. On the other hand, there are thousands who at age 65 will not file applications, notwithstanding their need for assistance, because they want to avoid being humbled and embarrassed by the means test. These two classes would well balance each other. I am certain, Mr. Speaker, that Canadians who are called upon to meet the cost of this new legislation will have no objection to extending themselves a little further if need be to eliminate this discomfoting procedure known as the means test and enable the government to pay this universal pension without a means test to everyone who applies for it at age 65 and over. The present legislation is a good beginning in that direction, and I am hopeful that in the not too distant future the government in its wisdom will be able to eliminate the means test altogether.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare has frankly stated during the debate that time and experience may suggest improvements. At the risk of being redundant I want to ask the minister again to review section 5 of the act which deals with the suspension of the pension to anyone who leaves Canada for a certain period. At age 70 and over people become quite frail, and frequently they are alone. They may have