

liable for payment of the amount of pensions paid his father during a period of say from one to ten years? People ask me questions ... and I ask questions in return.... We all hope to get through this business before the New Year. It seems to me it is not necessary to make any long comments or to prolong the issue or to make interruptions. We are here to find facts. Let us find them to the best of our ability....

**Mr. Smallwood** One point I did not mention was the blind. If a blind person of 21 years or older, who has satisfied the same residence qualifications and who is not an Indian.... "To be eligible for such a pension a blind pensioner must be so blind as to be unable to perform any work for which eyesight is essential...."

*[Short recess]*

**Mr. Vardy** Mr. Chairman, we are dealing now with aged people, up around 70 years of age, and I think that the one thing above all others we should not do is, we should not try to kid the children. Let's try to give them a fair, true angle as it stands. Now I believe the facts are, and I am sure Mr. Smallwood will correct me if I go wrong, that we have around 12,000 persons in Newfoundland around 70 years of age. I take it that not more than 5% of these would be living in rented homes. The first qualification on the application, or the means test, that is given to these men, would be that they could not at any time during the period when they would be receiving old age pensions assign or transfer their property to their heirs or successors, in order to evade having the state come in eventually and take their property for the amount of pension they have received. Now in my time I have filled out, without exaggeration, anywhere from 40 to 50 old age pension forms for people, and while Mr. Smallwood was explaining this clause my thoughts were going back to these people. I can think of them at this moment almost by name, in the past 30 years or around there, and I have been at various times in various communities, and I can say without fear of contradiction that I have never signed an old age pension form without having it go through. Now if any of these men had to submit to the means test, as I understand it ... think of one individual who would today be receiving his old age pension. For the simple fact is that if they knew, or his sons, married or single knew, that when poor old dad reaches 72 or 75

and passes on to his great reward the state steps in and takes the property to pay for the old age pension he received, to begin with they would not allow him to accept his old age pension. If these old age pensioners knew that that was going to happen they would not apply for that old age pension — in a great many cases, there are isolated cases of course.

**Mr. Smallwood** Up to \$2,000 or more. The estate must be valued at around \$2,000 or more.

**Mr. Vardy** Of course it depends also on the value that would be put on the property in the outports. For instance a humble little home of two stories 20 x 30 and so on, in the city of St. John's would be valued at around \$3-4,000 probably, whereas the same home in the outports would be valued at \$3-400.... A \$2,000 home in an outport in Newfoundland, on a forced sale, has to be quite a good property. And I take it also that the auditors would give the applicant for the old age pension the benefit of the doubt. No one would be inclined to over-estimate the value of any property, but...

**Mr. Smallwood** Could I interrupt? The assessing of the value of the property is done by the local, the Newfoundland pensions authority. It is they who fix the value of the property, not the Government of Canada, but the Government of Newfoundland, and they base it on the general value of the property in and around the same locality.

**Mr. Chairman** Maybe, Mr. Vardy, you could clear up something for me. Maybe while you are on the subject you might care to address Mr. Smallwood on whether or not I am correct in assuming that the assessment does not take place unless and until the property is taken over.

**Mr. Vardy** ... I honestly feel that there would be a very limited number under these conditions in Newfoundland qualified for, or even applying for the old age pension. The feeling exists in Newfoundland, rightly or wrongly, among the old, aged fishermen, that when they reach the age of 75 years, even though they have a few dollars in the sock as it is often referred to, and they have a humble property around them, the boys take over the fishing gear and go about their way to make their living, that they should get the old age pension, and I believe that if the means test was very severe, that there would be a number at this very moment eliminated from the list. I would not