

perhaps ought to be assisted with the amount that the federal government is giving toward old age pensions.

Mr. St. Laurent: That matter was carefully considered for a considerable period of time, but it was not found possible to devise any way in which the old age pension could be paid before there was in existence in Newfoundland a provincial government responsible to a legislature. The act requires the making by a provincial government of a contract with the federal government, in order to recoup three-quarters of what it pays out for old age pensions, under its provincial law, up to a maximum of \$30 a month. Suggestions were made that, if the legislature elected in Newfoundland passed a law of that kind, it might be made retroactive. It was desired to give the people of Newfoundland treatment as good as that which was given to Canadians of the other provinces. As the hon. member knows, in my province it was a matter of several years, after the dominion old age pension legislation was passed, before the provincial government passed its statute and took advantage of it; and there were no retroactive payments to the old people of my province at that time. It was felt that it would not do to be treating the people of Newfoundland in a manner different from that in which Canadians of the other provinces had been treated. The delegation from Newfoundland, therefore, finally but most reluctantly came to the conclusion that the best thing to do would be to proceed as expeditiously as possible to elect their legislature, enact their old age pension legislation, and make their contract which would become effective as soon as it was made.

Mr. MacInnis: I appreciate all the difficulties that the Prime Minister has pointed out. With the best intentions in the world, perhaps it would prove impossible to devise a scheme that could accomplish what I mentioned. But I do not believe that at the present moment Newfoundland is in the same position as were the other provinces before they took advantage of the Old Age Pensions Act. The act was there for them to take advantage of it; and if they did not do so, that was the fault of the provinces. But here we have coming into confederation a new province that did not have that opportunity. I had hoped there might be some way by which the dominion could make the payments, pending the time that a provincial act was passed.

Mr. Knowles: I should like to ask a further question in connection with the point emphasized by the hon. member for Vancouver East. It seems to me that it highlights the need for old age pensions being put on a

Newfoundland

federal basis. We are all annoyed and disturbed by the fact that there must be this long delay before old age pensions become effective in Newfoundland. My question is this. If the dominion-provincial conference of 1945 had succeeded, and the plan to pay \$30 a month to every Canadian over the age of seventy, without a means test, had been put into effect, would that \$30 a month go to the people of Newfoundland as at April 1?

Mr. St. Laurent: In the hypothesis just mentioned by the hon. member, it would. Just as soon as a resident of Newfoundland became a Canadian citizen, with the required period of residence in Newfoundland, he would have been entitled to the old age pension under that scheme. But that is not the scheme that exists at the present time. Under the present scheme, any province can pay old age pensions under a provincial law, and recover three-quarters of what it pays up to a maximum of \$30 a month. The hon. member says that it highlights the desirability of having the matter on a federal basis. There are people who will agree with the hon. member, but there are a great many who will not.

Mr. Knowles: That was the government's proposal to the provinces in 1945.

Mr. St. Laurent: Yes. That was the proposal at the time, because there was to be a pension payable to everyone without a means test.

Mr. Knowles: Hear, hear.

Mr. St. Laurent: But this is a pension which is payable to those who require it, according to the standards set by the legislation. The pensions are administered by the provincial governments and it is they who determine whether or not an individual comes within the category determined by the means test. The responsibility of the federal government under the federal legislation is to reimburse to the province three-quarters of the amount it has in fact paid out, up to a maximum of \$30 a month for each pensioner.

Mr. MacNicol: A considerable number of Newfoundlanders live in Toronto, many of them in Davenport riding. Many of them are quite old. For some time two Newfoundlanders came to me to see whether I could assist them to get old age pensions. One was eighty-four years old. He has since died. The other was seventy-eight, and he too has died. I know quite a number of others. The one who was eighty-four years old had lived in Toronto for nineteen years. The other had lived in Toronto for eighteen years. They were both away over the age limit. Of course the Ontario government could do nothing for them. I am wondering