

*Newfoundland*

not an amendment be made to the Old Age Pensions Act under this Bill No. 12, which we have been handed today, to the effect that if the new legislature of Newfoundland passes an old age pensions act at its first session, and provides that payment shall be retroactive to March 31 of this year, then Canada will pay three-quarters of that pension disbursement from the same date. I would point out to the Prime Minister that in Bill No. 12 there are amendments of a type similar to many of the Canadian statutes. I do not see why we could not make an amendment of that type to the Old Age Pensions Act. As a matter of fact, Bill No. 12 already contains one amendment to the Old Age Pensions Act.

The Prime Minister has said that both the Canadian delegates and the delegates from Newfoundland were anxious to do anything that could be done in order that the applicants for old age pensions in Newfoundland could be paid from March 31. That being the intent, and I think it is the will of every member of this house tonight, I suggest that such an amendment should be placed in the new Bill No. 12.

The Minister of Finance compares the situation in Newfoundland with that in the other provinces. But there really is no comparison at all. When the Old Age Pensions Act was passed by the dominion, each of the provincial governments was in existence. It was well known what the legislation was to be, and those governments had the choice of either accepting the legislation or not acting under it. Here the trouble is that Newfoundland has not a government. That is the only reason why the people there cannot get this pension as from March 31. I suggest therefore that the situations are not at all parallel. I would ask the Prime Minister why it is not possible to bring in an amendment to the Old Age Pensions Act under this Bill No. 12, providing that, when the pension is authorized in Newfoundland, Canada will pay three-quarters of it as from March 31, 1949.

**Mr. St. Laurent:** It is not impossible. It has been considered that it would not be fair to the Canadians of the other provinces, but there is nothing impossible about it. It could be done if it were considered to be the fair thing to do. But the matter was examined, and it was felt that it would not be fair to the other Canadians to make special provisions granting to the new Canadians who would come in from Newfoundland a privilege that had not been granted to anybody else.

**Mr. Green:** The Prime Minister has taken the stand this session, I believe, and in other

sessions, that the members who come here from the various provinces of Canada speak for the people of those provinces, and that it is not necessary to have an expression of opinion from the various provincial governments. Here is an instance where that belief which he holds could be put to practical advantage. There are here tonight members from every province of Canada, and not one of them has risen to object to making these old age pensions retroactive or to providing that Canada pay her share from March 31. There is not one member here who has objected to that, and I venture to say that every single member in the house right now would be favourable to action of that kind being taken. Surely on this point we can speak for the people of Canada.

**Mr. Grant:** Speak for yourself.

**Mr. Green:** I would hate to be obliged to speak for the hon. member. Surely we can say that our people, the people of the nine provinces of Canada, will be quite agreeable to having the old people of Newfoundland get their pensions as from March 31.

**Mr. Bertrand (Prescott):** Provided the province pays its share.

**Mr. Claxton:** If the hon. member's suggestion were to be carried out, would we not be in this position, that any applicant who applied to the old age pension administration of a province for an old age pension would then feel that he or she had not been justly treated if the application was not received and the payment was not granted right back to the date on which the person attained the age of seventy? Are we not in that position, not only with regard to our contractual arrangements with the provinces but with regard to the individuals in every part of Canada? Having had something to do with this administration for some time, I really think that is the position. A person qualifies for old age pension not merely by reason of attaining the age of seventy, but by reason of having attained the age of seventy, of having qualified under the provisions existing, of having made an application, of having the province make an inspection and then making an award which subsequently results in the federal government making its contribution of 75 per cent.

I suggest to the hon. member that any other arrangements would be breaking faith with the other provinces, because, as you know, some of them took a number of years to come into the arrangement. It would be very difficult, once that were done, to provide for the administration under the existing arrangements with the provinces which administer the plans.