

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Fourth Session – Eleventh Legislature 1st Day

Monday, December 3, 1951

MOTION FOR ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

The House proceeded to the Order – Consideration of His Honour's Speech.

Mr. A. T. Stone (Saskatoon City): — Mr. Speaker, I would first of all say how glad I am to see that the health of the member for Kinistino (Mr. Woods) has improved to the point where he is now back in his place in this Assembly. I trust that he will enjoy health to the point that he will be able to continue to take his place in this Chamber.

In rising to move an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, I would like first of all to welcome to this Legislature the new member for Gravelbourg (Mr. E. H. Walker). I wish him all the luck, and I trust that he finds this work in this Assembly as interesting as I have. I feel that with youth on his side he will be able to absorb the increasing demands on the members of this House.

I believe congratulations are in order to the people of the Gravelbourg Constituency for their wise choice of a representative. One can only surmise that, in making that choice, they weighed the facts carefully, facts which pointed out clearly the benefits accruing from a government which has truly and progressively been bringing to the people of this province the things which have been denied them by other governments, the kind of measures which bring some happiness to people who have not had too much happiness in their lives. In spite of the discontent and misstatements of the hon. members of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition, people the length and breadth of this province appreciate dealing with a government which is more concerned with the requirements of the people than with their political affiliations. I sympathize with the Leader of the Opposition in the loss of this seat; it is unfortunate that so many good Liberals were on holiday at that particular time. I think he should have more control over his supporters and not allowed so many to be absent at that particular time.

In the passing of the Hon. Doctor J. M. Uhrich, the late Lieutenant Governor of this province, we lost one of our most colourful and hard-working citizens. The choice of the present Lieutenant Governor, I am sure, is greeted by everyone as a well deserved and a happy one.

Since this House prorogued, last spring, there has been great concern among people the world-over, and especially among the people in the British Commonwealth of Nations, over the low condition of His Majesty the King. However, his remarkable progress after a very serious operation, and his steady progress since that time has been a great relief to all His loyal subjects.

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So much has been said – and I guess a great deal more will be said – about the tour of Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth and His Royal Highness and Duke of Edinburgh, that all I need to say at this time, Mr. Speaker, is that our land has never been visited by two nicer or more gracious people. We sincerely hope that they will be able to return in the very near future and spend a great deal more time with us.

The British election is now history . . .

Mr. W. A. Tucker (Leader of the Opposition): — Hear, hear! Page Mr. Sturdy!

Mr. Stone: — Now that the smoke has died away and the cheering has ended it does seem to me there must be considerable doubt in many people's minds as to who really did win the British election. Surely no government with such a small majority can take too many liberties with an opposition which represents approximately 49 per cent of the electors. It is indeed unfortunate for the rest of the world at this particular time that the British Isles could not have formed a government strong enough in numbers to allow its very wise councillors to take part in fashioning a lasting peace.

Mr. F. M. Dundas (Qu'Appelle-Wolseley): — What about Ontario?

Mr. Stone: — Coming back to this side of the water, we find that increased cost of living is still on the rampage. Even the slightest increase in the cost-of-living index means a reduction in a not-too-good standard of living which thousands of our citizens are enjoying today. For the second year in succession, Mr. Speaker, our main industry, that of agriculture, has fallen upon misfortune. The loss of revenue from this industry will be felt by almost all the people in this province.

Today the members of this House have been called in session for the specific purpose of passing a Bill which will bring to many of our people some measure of security and happiness. This Special Session can be described as a milestone on the road of progress to economic security. Let me say, in case there are those who think otherwise (and I have no doubt there are some in this House, today), that the little progress that is being made, today, does not come out of the goodness of heart of politicians or political parties. This is the direct result of men and women the world over who, for almost the last century, have banded themselves together with a determination that our senior citizens shall not go without reward for the wealth and prosperity which they have helped to produce in their lifetime. That fight will go on as long as people are left impoverished during the days they are not able to take their place in the production line. So, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking of the hundreds of thousands of people the world over in trade unions and farm organizations, in co-operatives and so on, who have waged for some considerable time a fight that would bring some measure of security and opportunity to our senior citizens. It is a great pleasure, a great honour bestowed upon me as a member of a trade union, to be able to move this Address today. It is an honour to the City of Saskatoon and the many thousands of people who appreciate this Government; it is an honour bestowed upon them to have me, as their representative, move this Address.

The process of bringing benefits to our people has been exasperatingly slow. There was not enough money during the depression years to bring any social welfare benefits. During the war there was an all-out war effort and nothing could be done along those lines. Since the war we have been too busy

paying for the last war and preparing for a possible future war.

The history of Old Age Pension legislation in this country is an interesting one. In 1926 there was a Federal election which left a stalemate between the two old parties. A small group led by our late and beloved leader J. S. Woodsworth, held the balance of power between those two old parties, and it was the ambition of both parties, of course, to get the support of that little group. But there was a price to be paid. The Leader of the Conservative Party (The late Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen) at that time, would not accede to the demands of this small group. However the Leader of the Liberal Party, the late Rt. Hon. MacKenzie King, who always had an eye for power, did accept those demands and in 1927 carried out his promise to that small group, and Old Age legislation was enacted. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that it was a democratic socialist who was directly responsible for the progressive piece of legislation that was put on the statute books of Ottawa in 1927. In 1928, the Saskatchewan Government passed enabling legislation providing our people of 70 years and over with a \$20 a month pension, with an allowable income of \$365 per year, and there it stayed for 16 years – from 1927 to 1943; during sixteen years no change in the benefits of our old people. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, this was chiefly because there was no threat from the socialists in Canada. During this time, the old parties pretty well had much their own way. I know, during the thirties it was not very safe for the pioneers of the C.C.F. movement to show their faces in many parts of this province. But in 1943 something happened – the C.C.F. almost elected a government in Ontario in 1943. The tide of the socialists was growing by leaps and bounds throughout the west. Something had to be done, and so they brushed a few crumbs off the table and in 1943 the pension was raised to \$25 a month with an allowable income of \$425 a year.

The next time we saw any change in the pension was in 1947. By this time the cost of living had got completely out of control, and so agitation was growing once more and the pension was raised in 1947 to \$30 a month with an allowable income of \$480 a year.

By 1949 the Federal Government was in such a poor spot with the provinces aiding our old age pensions by supplementing allowances, I imagine they felt so poor that they had to come out with a \$40 a month pension with \$600 allowable income in 1949. So, Mr. Speaker, that brings us up to the present changes today.

I have no doubt that there are many members here who remember the Dominion-Provincial Conference which was called in the fall of 1950, in December I believe. I want to draw to the attention of this House that had it not been for the determination of our Premier, this conference would have collapsed with exactly nothing being done. There are not many people who know that our Premier fought and finally managed to secure the aid of one or two other provinces to enable the Dominion Government to bring down our present changes in the Old Age legislation. As in 1926 a stalwart democratic socialist stood up and fought for our old people, so, today, we have another stalwart democratic socialist carrying on that fight.

Mr. Tucker: — You've written off the C.C.F. in Ontario and Mr. Jolliffe, have you?

Mr. Stone: — I'll come to that later.

I have not yet discovered anything terrible about socialism, but listening to my hon. members on the other side I don't think they have either.

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The worst thing that has been said about socialism, apparently, is that it destroys the initiative in the individual. Well, I wonder how much initiative is destroyed in an individual who is trying to raise a large family on a small income by receiving family allowance. I wonder how much initiative is destroyed in an individual who is unemployed and receives unemployment insurance.

Mr. Tucker: — Did the socialists fetch that in, too?

Mr. Stone: — Perhaps this Government destroyed the initiative individuals to go without proper medical and hospital care by providing them with hospital insurance, because there were hundreds and thousands of people in this province who just denied themselves the proper hospital and medical care previous to the introduction of this plan. They just had not the economic means. By the means of the Hospitalization Plan we have been able to put thousands of our people back on the road to good health, and back to full production. By socialism, Mr. Speaker, people are able to obtain the things they need collectively which they are unable to obtain individually.

A committee of the Senate and House of Commons was set up in 1950 to study the problem of old age security. I have read that report and I am kind of amazed at the masses of material and reports that were received by that committee from a fairly wide section of society. I say I am amazed at the amount of material accepted by that committee, Mr. Speaker, but I am somewhat disappointed at the limited benefits that came out of the findings and recommendations of that committee. For instance, the Federal Government had recognized and have accepted their responsibility to all those over 70 years of age. Now, everyone knows, and they know too, that \$40 per month is not an adequate pension in this day and age, certainly not to those who have to other means of providing any other income. But true to form, the Federal has shifted that part of the responsibility to someone else, possibly the province if they so wish, to add a little more to that meager pension. I believe that surely something better than \$40 a month could have been provided to those people who are unable to provide any income for themselves. Responsibility goes a little farther than merely providing a small cash income. There is the matter of providing medical care for those old people. that is a rather important and a rather expensive problem for people of 70 years and over. And here again the Federal Government have shifted the responsibility t provincial governments, municipal governments or to the individuals themselves. It does seem to me, and I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the very least the Federal Government could have done was to assist the provinces which are now providing nursing care for these people over 70 who are ill and crippled.

The thing I am very disappointed about is the fact that the age limit was not lowered to 65 for females at least. Surely there is very little danger of taking many hands off the production line if we had lowered the age limit of females to 65. I do not know many women who are able or who want to work after 65 years of age. Had this been done, had the Federal Government accepted women down to 65, then it would have been possible for the provinces in the Bill before us, to include women from 60 to 65. I feel deeply about this, for there is a need for legislation of this kind. I don't think we appreciate the work that women do towards our economy. If a woman raises a family and looks after a home, I don't think the contribution that she makes can be measured in dollars and cents. Surely if she is in the position in which many find themselves where they have to go out and provide an income for themselves, surely the very least we can offer these women as a reward for

the contribution they have made to our economy is to provide them with at least some measure of security in their old age. I know many males of 55 and over who have to seek new employment, and it is pretty difficult for a male of that age to go out and compete with young men. It is double hard for women of that age and, especially when they get over 60, many of them are not physically able to go out. There are many such women in my constituency and I feel sorry for them living to go out to do menial tasks to provide a living for themselves. They have to turn out in the cold wintry nights and go down to some café and wash dishes or maybe clean houses or wash clothes. I feel that the age could have been lowered for females. The legislation which will be presented to us at this Session will, I am sure, meet with the full approval of all the members on both sides of this House, because many thousands of our people will derive much benefit from it. I think when the legislation is brought down we will have a full opportunity to discuss this.

We are not by any means at the end of the road even as far as old age security is concerned. There is a small but powerful segment of society who are warning the people that we have gone as far as it is possible to go in social welfare for this country. You see our economy is geared today, and it will be geared for some time to come, to a tremendous defence programme, and nothing, apparently, must interfere with that expenditure for defence or the system will collapse. It is my belief that this system can and will have to provide more services to the people, and I am not too concerned if it does collapse, for I have faith enough in the human race to know that if this system collapses, a better system will be found to take its place, one that will give the people what they need.

In reading about the 'shellacking' our Party received in Ontario, I was impressed by this news comment that Socialism was no longer a major political threat in Canada. I cannot believe this, and I sincerely hope it is not so, for I dread to think of what could happen to our people should that threat be removed and reaction set in.

In conclusion, I appreciate the opportunity I have today to play a small part in bringing forward another piece of legislation which will benefit many thousands of our people. I have had the pleasure since being a member of this Government, a pleasure which I will look back on, I know, for years to come, of bringing to many of our people much benefit.

So, Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in moving:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable William John Patterson,

Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Saskatchewan,

May it Please Your Honour:

We, His Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Saskatchewan, in Session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present Session.

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DEBATE ON ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr. A. P. Swallow (Yorkton): — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the privilege of seconding the motion introduced by the hon. member for Saskatoon (Mr. Stone). I want to congratulate him on his very constructive and interesting history of Old Age Pension legislation in Canada. I also want to add my congratulations to the hon. member for Gravelbourg (Mr. E. H. Walker). I believe he has now the honour of being the youngest member in the Legislature, and I am sure it will be interesting to a lot of young people in the province to know that he is unmarried I am sure it is encouraging to all members of the House to see men of his calibre taking interest in public life in this province. I hope many more will follow his example.

I am glad that the member for Saskatoon referred to the great part played by Mr. J. S. Woodsworth, the founder of the C.C.F., in his battle at Ottawa. He consistently carried that on for many years before the old age became a reality in Canada. Blair Fraser, in his recent biography of Mr. Woodsworth, stated that he was many years ahead of the men of his day in his thinking and in his vision regarding social security. I am sure it is very fitting that he has been acclaimed one of ten of the greatest Canadians of his time. I am sure old people all over Canada have cause to bless the day that Mr. Woodsworth entered public life.

It is interesting in checking over the history of Old Age Pension legislation in other countries, to find that in countries where they have had social democratic governments, old people have much more security than they have in countries with governments of principles opposite to that. This is true of the Scandinavian countries where for many years they have had great securities not only in pensions but in health services and in housing programmes. It is also true of New Zealand . . .

Mr. L. L. Trippe (Turtleford): — They kicked them out.

Mr. Swallow: — Where a Labour Government, in 1938, passed legislation that was very much beyond anything that they had ever enjoyed before. Later they amended their legislation to give greater security to their people.

Mr. Tucker: — Too much security, apparently!

Mr. Swallow: — Under age benefits, women of 60 in New Zealand receive a pension, and men of 65. They instituted a Dominion-wide housing programme so that old people could live in comfort away from the natural loneliness of old age, and there they were absolutely removed from fear of eviction at any time. Out in Australia, again under a Labour Government, legislation was introduced there which was very much better than anything they had had previously. Again, women of 60 and men of 65 enjoy the pension in Australia.

I think you all know of what great strides have been made in England since the Labour Government was elected in 1945. There not only the old people but all enjoy a greater degree of security than probably any country in the world.

Mr. Tucker: — No Canadian wants to go over there and enjoy it?

Mr. Swallow: — I am sure Mr. Churchill — I think he has stated that he will not (in fact I don't think he would dare) remove that advanced legislation they have in England.

But as a contrast, Mr. Speaker, we come to the United States, that wealthy country that we know, south of us; a country which has a government that has always stressed the principles of free enterprise and the American way of life. But when we look into their history, we find that old people in that country have not the degree of security that they have in the countries I have mentioned.

Mr. Trippe: — More.

Mr. Swallow: — It is a fact that in some wealthy states they do receive in some cases as high as \$78 a month, but if you check into other states — poorer states — we find that pensions go as low as \$19 a month. That would go a long way in living nowadays. I think, as it is said that a chain is no greater than its weakest link, I believe that a country is no greater than it treats the minority groups and the old people of that country.

Now we come back to Saskatchewan, and it was in January, 1945, under a C.C.F. Government and again under a socialist democratic government, that for the first time the old people of Saskatchewan were presented with a card like I have here, which gave to them security they had never known before. On this card it gives you the benefits they are entitled to. First, medical and social services; second, dental services; drugs (at the present time they do pay 20 per cent on the drugs), optical services and chiropody. Now those services give to them absolute security in anything they need in the way of health services. Only those who have gone through the conditions where they did not know what would happen if they were taken sick, who had to depend on charity as they had to before this Government was elected actually know what it means to receive that card. I believe that today our old people know what it means to receive that card. I believe that today our old people are living longer because of the fact that that fear has been removed from them.

I have a few examples here just to indicate what it would have meant to some. Now these figures apply only to hospitalization. Here is an old age pensioner who would have paid \$520 if it had not been for that card; another one would have paid \$956; and here is an extreme case where one would have paid \$9,815. These are all in addition to medical services or any surgical care. There may be many hundreds of cases in the province similar to this. Here is a blind pensioner who would have paid \$2,067. Now this has not only moved a great load from the shoulders of our people, it has removed a great responsibility from many other people in the province. It might be a son or daughter who have a family of their own to keep as to clothes, food and education and supply that family with medical services. If it had not been for this card, in many cases they would have felt it their responsibility and would have tried to meet that responsibility. It would have meant cutting down the standard of living of their family, cutting out the necessities; so you see this has removed a load from many people in this province. I don't think it is any wonder that among the hundreds of letters that have come into the Government expressing their appreciation for these services, one party expressed himself in this manner: He said, "God bless the C.C.F. Government."

We now have in the province of Saskatchewan free Government-operated homes: one at Wolseley, with a capacity of 117; one in Regina, holding 75 old people . . .

Mr. J. G. Egnatoff (Melfort): — How about the one at Melfort?

Mr. Swallow: — . . . one at Saskatoon for 100 people; and one is being built very

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soon in Melfort, which will hold 150 people.

Mr. Egnatoff: — Yeah!

Mr. Swallow: — There are also in the province 24 other homes operated by churches, charity organizations and so forth. These do receive Government assistance. The Government, realizing that this is a field which must be expanded, has set up a committee that is studying the problems with the hope of increasing the Government homes, so that these people will have more pleasant surroundings to end their life — those that have not homes of their own. I hope that Yorkton will soon be having one the same as Melfort.

Mr. Egnatoff: — You'll have to wait a long time then.

Hon. J. H. Sturdy (Minister of Social Welfare): — How long did they wait under the Grits?

Mr. Tucker: — How long before you do something in Rosthern, too?

Mr. Swallow: — It is true that since 1945 when this legislation was brought into effect, other provinces have followed suit; but still Saskatchewan is leading in the complete services they give in the way of help to their old people.

Take British Columbia. There the old people receive practically the same care with one exception: dental care is given on a partial basis. But this is another part of it: 20 per cent of the total cost of health services to the people in British Columbia is charged back to the municipalities on a per capita basis. I don't believe the cities and towns and rural municipalities of this province would appreciate it if this Government did the same.

Mr. Tucker: — If you gave them the same share of revenues from the sales tax, they would be glad to have it.

Mr. Speaker: — Order!

Mr. Swallow: — In Alberta also there are limitations. Chronic cases are not treated in hospitals in Alberta. If there are no homes then it becomes the responsibility of the municipalities. Drugs are not supplied in hospitals. In the way of dental care, the patient pays \$40 of the price of a set of teeth and the Government pays \$40. There are no appliances of any kind supplied, as in Saskatchewan. So you see we are leading in that field.

We come to Ontario, a province we know has great wealth — I believe they have a lot of wealth that we should have in Saskatchewan — and we find that no medical or surgical treatments can be given unless it can be given in the office of a doctor or in the homes. No major surgery or doctor's care is given in hospitals — that is, if paid by the government.

Mr. Egnatoff: — That's not true.

Mr. Swallow: — I see one of the members from across shaking his head. These facts are taken from official documents, Mr. Speaker. There are no drugs or optical care given, and only extraction of teeth in Ontario.

Coming to Manitoba our neighbour to the east, I think you will know that now the new boundaries of the Yorkton constituency extend to the Manitoba

border, and I have had the opportunity of going over there, and I have made the opportunity of meeting old age pensioners. I visited the homes of these old people and I find that they only receive the basic pension in Manitoba, and do not receive any supplementary payments, and they do not receive any health services from the government. They still have to go to municipalities, as they did in Saskatchewan previous to 1944. I found that they would hardly believe that just across the border in Saskatchewan, an old person would receive a card which entitled him to all the services I have mentioned. When I left this home, which is about four miles over the border, they said: "I guess we will have to wait until we can elect a C.C.F. Government in Manitoba."

Now, Mr. Speaker, after going over these things that I have given you, we realize that in every province in Canada there is a different policy adopted regarding our old people. It does not seem right that it should matter what part of Canada you live in when you happen to become old to receive the things that are absolutely necessary in old age. In the case of Family Allowance, the principle of treating all the same all over Canada has been adopted and recognized. Here in Saskatchewan or in Quebec a child is assured of at least the minimum necessities of life, and it would seem only fair that our old people should receive the same consideration all over Canada.

As we know, on January 1st of this next year, the Federal Government is taking over the responsibility of paying pensions to those in the 70-year group and over, which we think is right though we do not agree on the amount that they are paying. We think that it should be a larger pension. But we also believe that this Federal Government in assuming that responsibility should also realize that health services are just as necessary to our old people, and that they should supply all old people in Canada with complete health services.

I am glad that today in this House we are taking another step in bringing social security to another group, and I hope we will consistently go forward until the fear of want is absolutely removed from the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Tucker: — I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

(Debate adjourned.)