

Wednesday, Feb. 15th

Ontario's Large Proportion.

He noted that a census of 1921 showed that Ontario had 41 per cent. of all the people in Canada over 70 years of age, there being 102,284 people of that class in the Province. It was estimated that by 1928 this figure had increased by 10 per cent., a large liability to be met by the Province.

The chief feature of the act, he continued, was the provision for an allowance pension of \$365.

Liberal members protested the statement.

Mr. Ferguson pointed out that if a man had an income of \$250 he was entitled to \$115, and if he had \$200 he was entitled to \$165. The maximum pension was to be \$20 a month.

Liberal Leader Sinclair still protested the Premier's interpretation of the statute.

Mr. Ferguson raised a long argument on the old-age pensions matter. The survey forecast in the Speech from the Throne had to be made, he contended, to see how the solution could best be worked out. It was not merely a question of legislation in Ontario, for there were conditions obtaining here which were not common to other Provinces. He stressed the point that the East was unlike the West; the West was younger, the people were younger, and the pensions scheme could be adopted there far more easily, speaking from the point of view of financing, than in Ontario.

For instance, he said, Prince Edward Island, with a total population of 85,000, had more than 5,200 people who would be entitled to pensions under the scheme. "Their Prime Minister told me," said Mr. Ferguson, "that they couldn't think of the thing. The burden would be too great."

Mr. Ferguson pointed out that there were 112,514 persons in Ontario over the age of 70. Quebec has 70,000; Manitoba, 11,000; Saskatchewan, 9,000; Alberta, 9,000; British Columbia, 10,000; Nova Scotia, 27,000, and Prince Edward Island, 7,000.

If only one-third of the aged people in Ontario were to get a \$120 pension the cost to the Provincial Treasury, he said, would be \$4,200,000. On top of that the Province would have to bear administration costs.

Debate on the question developed for a few moments at this stage into a free-for-all. Then the Prime Minister outlined some of the factors which, he inferred, contributed to his "look-before-leaping policy."

Children's Responsibility.

"We have," he said, "adopted the principle in this Legislature of having children provide for their parents in their old age. Now, we shouldn't come along and relieve the children of their responsibility. We should see that every legal means is exhausted before the State is called in to relieve them of their responsibilities. That is a condition obtaining here, but not elsewhere, except possibly in Saskatchewan."

Mr. Ferguson mentioned the Houses of Industry in which, he said, people are being cared for comfortably. "Are we going to say that these poor people are to be put upon a pension? That is another condition which does not prevail generally throughout the Dominion."

Mentioning the extensive pensioning scheme of railways, etc., he asked: "What's to become of these?"

The Government, said the Prime Minister, doesn't want to rush into the scheme until it has more complete knowledge of it. "Until it knows" he added, "exactly where it's going"

He said he had discussed the Government's survey attitude with different labor organizations, and that they had considered the Government to be perfectly "reasonable" in its view.

Aurelien Belanger (Liberal, Russell) moved the adjournment of the debate.