

**STATEMENT OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, M.C., 2nd DISTRICT,
RHODE ISLAND, ON INTRODUCTION OF BILL IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PROVIDING FOR THE CREATION OF A SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROBLEMS OF
THE AGING, MARCH 10, 1955.**

Much has been said over the past few years about the very real problem facing our elder citizens. Many causes are cited as the reason for the increased severity of the problem. The extending of the life span as the result of the great advances made in medical science, the shift of our economy from agriculture to industrial, and the new mode of compulsory retirement through private plans and social security, appear to have much to do with the increase. According to a report of the Rhode Island Governor's Commission of the Aging, there were, as of January, 1953, over 71,000 persons 65 years of age or older living in the State of Rhode Island. It is estimated that over one million such persons reside in the New England area and that from 8 to 10 per cent of the population of the entire country falls within that age group.

It is generally conceded that these older citizens have the right and should be entitled to lead a proud, productive and independent life throughout their years. While the agreement on this is more or less unanimous, little is being done to attack the problem on an over-all basis. The Administration is doing nothing about it. Looking back at the record for the past few years I find the situation the same - the Administration admits to a knowledge of the problem but no action to remedy it.

Individual proposals to take care of small segments of the group have been made and appear to receive sympathetic consideration.

I, myself, have recently introduced in the House of Representatives bills providing for a lowering of the eligibility age for social security benefits and authorizing the admittance of elderly single persons to federally-assisted low-cost housing projects.

Perhaps the principal reason for the lack of a comprehensive approach to the entire matter is that information - adequate information - is lacking as to just what the basic problems are. Until an intelligent determination on this is made, it will be extremely difficult if not impossible to chart a course of action to permit our older people to continue to lead proud, useful lives.

With this thought in mind I have, today, introduced proposed legislation in the House of Representatives. The resolution I have submitted would set up a Select Committee of members of the House to investigate the status of the older group to determine just what their basic problems are. This committee would also determine how the Federal Government can best cooperate with local communities and private industry in their efforts to provide better health and medical care, employment opportunities, living arrangements, recreation and educational facilities geared to the needs of such older aged groups. The Committee would report to the House of Representatives the results of its findings and would make specific recommendations as to how best proceed toward the ultimate goal - the economic security and well-being of the aged.