

Canada Assistance Plan

next day or so, we will persuade the government that it cannot stall any longer on the question of raising old age security payments to \$100 a month.

At the resolution stage I twitted the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) about the fact that he had not made any reference to changes in the Old Age Security Act. He said he had, but of course a reading of his speech shows he had not. I suggested he was actually ashamed of the failure of this proposed legislation so far as old age security recipients are concerned.

I want to say for the minister now, even though he himself made some reference to the matter last night, that there are some things in this bill for old age security recipients. There is health care without the necessity of a needs test, and there is the possibility of care and maintenance in homes. But all of these things are of the character of welfare. They are not the dignified, uplifting kind of thing which we did for the senior citizens of Canada in 1950, when we took the means test off the old age security pension and said to our old people: When you reach the point of retirement you get your state pension as a matter of right.

I do not want us to go back on the excellent position we took then. Neither does my hon. friend from Brantford, if he does not mind my mentioning him again, because he made the same plea on a late show not many nights ago. Let us not go back on the dignified stand we took when we got rid of the means test. I suggest that is what this legislation is asking us to do.

I referred earlier to the difference of opinion at Vancouver between Mr. Baetz and Mr. Davis. Although I know both of these gentlemen I have not spoken to them since that exchange took place, and if I seek to interpret their difference of opinion it is my own interpretation, and they might not agree with it. I think their dispute is one that highlights the very nature of this bill. Mr. Baetz wants it. He wants it with the least possible delay because he sees the good in it, the good things I have tried to point out tonight.

Mr. Davis is not unmindful of those good things, but he has worked with the Senate committee on aging. He has spent many years in the welfare field. He has been concerned with old people for a long time, and he says the bill will not only do nothing for our older

people, but in effect is taking a very retrograde step, the very step I have been discussing tonight.

Instead of the minister standing up and giving us the official position of the Canadian Welfare Council, as though nothing else should have been said—and what he said was perfectly true—along with that he should have paid some attention to what Mr. Davis had said and admitted that although this bill has much in it that is good it is not coping with the old age pension—

Mr. MacEachen: May I ask my hon. friend a question?

Mr. Knowles: Certainly.

Mr. MacEachen: Has his attention been drawn to a Canadian Press story from Vancouver in which Dr. Davis, upon whom he relies, is reported in quotes as follows:

The Canadian Assistance Plan is an excellent piece of legislation as it stands now.

• (9:50 p.m.)

Mr. Knowles: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I know of that statement by Dr. Davis and I was just pointing out that the difference between these two social workers is an understandable one. They both agree that the welfare aspects are good. I suspect Mr. Baetz is not happy about the old age part of it either, but Dr. Davis is deeply concerned about what it does not do for the older people. The Minister of National Health and Welfare is awfully good at this business of pulling quotations out of the hat and giving them to us. Last night he quoted the Canadian Labour Congress.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, just as a point of explanation, I should like to say that I do not wish to misrepresent Dr. Davis. He said what I think I quoted him as saying about the Canada Assistance Plan being excellent as it is, but that he would call for a parallel piece of legislation dealing with what my hon. friend is mentioning. I think the difficulty in the argument being made by my hon. friend is that he fails to separate the issues.

Mr. Knowles: I thank the minister for what he said, because I have an amendment on my desk which I will be bringing in which asks for the very thing he said Dr. Davis wants. Before I do that I wish to remind the minister that last night he quoted from the most recent brief presented by the Canadian Labour Congress to the government of Canada. He quoted the several sentences on page 24