

person as the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) will not be able to hold it back.

An hon. Member: Next year we shall be asked to provide pensions at age 45.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend wants to bring the pension age down to 45.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): And I suppose some people will want the four-day weekend.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I have heard it suggested that the age for the family allowance could be brought up and the age for old age security brought down, until they meet.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): And then we shall be a nation of drones.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I remember one Liberal member on the special committee of 1950 suggesting, when we were talking about contributions to a fund, that if we could get enough money into that fund the interest on it would pay for the pension and we would not need to levy any more taxes—and he was not a Social Creditor; he was a Liberal! Some interesting ideas have been thrown around.

We are not talking fancifully. I have lived through this experience. If I was not here, I heard about it and knew about it in the beginning. I recall the days when Mr. Dunning said to J. S. Woodsworth that we could not afford pensions for older people. I remember the days when the Senate said, when the House passed the first old age pension bill, that it would drive people to the dogs. But the Liberal government passed that bill. Then we got the \$20 pension at age 70, with a means test. So the story continues. The pension was increased gradually and, finally, we made the particular gain of 1950-51, which began in 1952. I believe that as surely as we made those elements of progress in the past, we shall make further progress as time goes on.

I am sorry that this minister seems to feel that it is good enough to do so little. He has stood up and said in the House and the committee that the purpose of this bill is merely to rescue a certain number of people, and that is supposed to be the end of the story. He may think that is the purpose of the bill, but the people of this country are calling for a much broader pension base. I do not know what his mail is like, but I know what I see in my mail. I know what has been written in the last couple of weeks by people who are aware of this bill; most of them, or a good many of them, are widows aged 62, 63, and so on, whose husbands in many cases were on the old age security pension up to one or two years ago. These people realize they are not going to get a pension. When these people, 375 of them a month, get that nice letter from the Department of National Health and Welfare saying, "Sorry, you lost your marriage partner, and there goes your pension", the minister is going to find that he is in a lot more trouble than he realizes at this moment.

I submit, and this is not so much a prophecy as a guess, that what I have been saying will be mild compared with what Liberal members will say in their own caucus. They

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will not say it here, but they will say it in their own caucus when they get letters, particularly from persons who got the pension for a few months or a year and then lost it because the married partner died just when they needed the money, needed the respect of being on the old age pension instead of on welfare or social assistance.

● (1710)

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I express my keen disappointment. I was delighted with the progressive steps that this Minister of National Health and Welfare seemed prepared to take in the twenty-ninth parliament. We got a decent family allowance arrangement instead of the FISP that had been put before us in the twenty-eighth parliament. We got an increase in the basic amount of the old age security, and some real improvements in the Canada Pension Plan. Why the minister is now crawling into this reactionary shell and talking in terms of a form of relief, when the country calls for a good social security program to be extended, is more than I can understand.

Although in part this speech may not sound like it, Mr. Speaker, we will vote for third reading of this bill because it is a start: it will help some 80,000 or 85,000 of our people. However, the time for moving seriously and effectively in the direction of pensions at age 60, certainly for all persons out of the labour market, is now.

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, last night at the Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, we completed the detailed consideration of this bill in the presence of the minister as a witness accompanied by several assistant deputy ministers or officials. The minister then gave some explanations and information on the bill which, according to him, is part of the social policy of the Liberal government.

In the speech which he delivered in the House on second reading of the bill last Friday, June 6, the minister was specially eloquent. He said among other things, and I quote:

Such a step is in the tradition which the Liberal governments...

This is why he is motivated. He added afterwards, quote:

... the Liberal Party committed itself to easing the burden on such couples by instituting this income-tested allowance for spouses in order to provide for those who most need it in our society a monthly income which would allow them to live in the dignity which they deserve.

But he cannot refrain from mentioning the word "Liberal".

And yet, Mr. Speaker, what exactly is that bill of the Liberal government? In my constituency and throughout the province of Quebec, the Liberals were quite vocal when they claimed that if they had a majority government—the prerequisite—a strong government, as they said, they would grant the old age pension on a universal basis at 60 years of age. They would not be trying to deceive people or save their face, but they would grant it on a universal basis.

An hon. Member: We never said that.