

Social Development Ministry

convention we passed the necessary resolutions to take part in the ongoing proceedings that led in 1961 to the formation of the New Democratic Party.

There is something else about 1960 that I should like to mention, and this does lead into the discussion on the motion before us. I see a couple more have arrived. My friend from Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) was probably a druggist then. The hon. member for Nanaimo-Alberni (Mr. Miller)—

An hon. Member: Just another kid.

Mr. Knowles: Yes, he was another kid. I am sure the hon. member for Rosedale in his recital of all those things that were happening to 1960 led many other members to think about what they were doing, those who can remember that far back.

I would like to mention that in 1960 the old age pension was \$55 a month, payable at age 70. There was what was known as old age assistance which was available on a means test basis between 65 and 70, but the old age pension itself was \$55 a month, not payable until age 70. The Liberals had increased it from \$40 to \$46 just before the election of 1957. When the Diefenbaker Tories came in in 1957, having said that that was not enough, they put it up to \$55 before the election in 1958 was held. Before the election in 1962, they put it up to \$65.

At this important point in time that the hon. member for Rosedale was talking about, in 1960, the old age pension was only \$55 a month. That was the maximum amount of the old age security. It was also the amount of old age assistance that was payable on a means test basis. Members of Parliament were getting an \$8,000 indemnity and \$2,000 in expense allowances. A lot more has happened to them than has happened to the rate of old age pensions.

● (1620)

I am about ready to join all this to my objection to the bureaucracy which this motion proposes to set up by asking this question: I wonder, if we had had this bureaucracy throughout the last 20 years, whether the old age pension would be \$190 a month, as it will be in July of this year. I doubt it. As I say, this package is wrapped up in beautiful paper and tied with a gorgeous piece of ribbon, but to my mind the heart of it lies in one sentence, namely, that the minister of state for social development is to have the authority to advise on the allocation of finance, personnel and other resources to federal programs which provide support for individual and social development in Canada. In other words, it is not so much this minister but the bureaucracy of which he is to be the head which will have the "say" about all social expenditures. This means it will have the say about social security and the guaranteed income supplement, it will have the say about veterans pensions, about public servants' superannuation, about grants, whether to old people or to native groups, and so on down the line. It will have the say when it comes to vetting or checking all of them and my prediction is—if you can call it a prediction 20 years later—that if we had had this kind of checking to hold these people back we should not be seeing

such high levels of social security payments as exist at the present time.

I believe that for all the fine talk about the desirability of having a group to plan new ventures and developments, the true effect of the order in council which this motion proposes to endorse will be to check social expenditures. That is why I say that inside this beautifully wrapped package there is a dangerous weapon, a time bomb which could do damage to our social programs and I do not think we should go for it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles: There are presently, in a number of our departments, excellent people who do a lot of good, hard work—all the research necessary to come up with programs. This is true of the Department of National Health and Welfare. Many of the programs which either the Liberals or the Tories have brought to the floor of the House as legislation were developed and planned by the professionals who are there in that department. The Department of Veterans Affairs is another example. We have a lot of trouble trying to get veterans legislation on to the floor of this House; I think that is because the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) has a lot of trouble getting his programs past the Treasury Board and other members of the cabinet because of the dollar question. Nevertheless, in that department there are first-rate public servants and many of them—one used to be able to say all of them—are veterans who keep coming up with ideas as to what is needed to recognize the rights of those who defended this country as members of our Armed Forces.

As time has gone on, the needs of veterans have changed. I know that in the department today the officials are thinking far more about the needs of the older veterans than they used to, because, of course, the veterans are older. Those people do a good job and I suspect that in some of the other departments with which I am less familiar, for example, the Department of Employment and Immigration and the Department of the Secretary of State, where training grants are administered, or in other departments which are concerned with public servants and their training, ideas are put together, becoming the basis of legislation which ministers try to get through. I believe it is an excellent thing that there should now exist a cabinet committee of ministers who are responsible for programs involving grants, pensions and other things that are good for the individuals who make up our society.

The Minister of Justice described that committee today, but it seems to me that the place where the hard bargaining should be done for senior citizens or for mothers or for children or for veterans or for people seeking jobs or training is in the departments which are concerned with those things. Even now, those departments have an awfully hard job getting their ideas across because of the various levels of bureaucracy which already exist. A department can come up with an idea and sell it to the minister, or the minister can supply the idea to his department and have his staff work it out. But after a project has been fully agreed to by the minister and the department there are the Treasury Board, the Privy Council office, the