

Pension Legislation Delayed

believed that the Liberals meant this promise, and that they would act upon it in this session of parliament. So when we came here for the opening of the session on May 16 we were not surprised—indeed we were pleased—to hear in the speech from the throne read to us in the other place, as recorded on page 7 of our own *Hansard* for May 16, the promise that this Canada pension plan would be implemented. The paragraph reads in these words:

My ministers have undertaken to establish a comprehensive system of contributory pensions. The new pensions will be co-ordinated with the existing provisions for old age security, for the purpose of enabling all Canadians to retire in security and with dignity. While the arrangements required for this great advance in the social security of our people are necessarily complex, the legislation submitted to you will be designed to make the new pension plan operative as soon as possible.

A few days later, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), when taking part in the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne, uttered these interesting words as reported in *Hansard* for May 20, 1963, at page 57:

We said during the campaign and subsequently—and, indeed, earlier in this house, in more detail, I believe, than any opposition party ever gave before, what we would do and in what order we would do it. Now we are taking steps to do what we said we would do. The intentions of the government as set out this year in the speech from the throne are not vague aspirations to be acted on some time, maybe never. We have set out simply in the speech the main matters we intend to bring forward during this session.

There you have, Mr. Speaker, a clear confirmation of the Liberal promise during the election campaign to bring in the Canada pension plan, a promise set out in the speech from the throne and confirmed by the Prime Minister in his first major speech in this House of Commons. Despite that kind of assurance, some of us have had previous experience in parliament of the Liberal party. I recall particularly their first announcements and promises to the Canadian people in the field of social security. They were made in 1919, and some of us know how long it took to get some of those promises implemented. We are still trying to get implementation of some of the things promised in 1919.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder if the hon. gentleman would permit a question. Would he mention a single piece of social legislation promised by the Liberal party in 1919, or even as late as 1945, which has ever been introduced and enacted in this parliament by any party other than the Liberal party?

Mr. Knowles: The Secretary of State seems to be proud of the way in which the Liberals have been prodded by opposition parties into bringing forward some of the measures which

[Mr. Knowles.]

they themselves advocated. In 1919 the Liberal party promised old age pensions, unemployment insurance and health insurance. It was seven or eight years before we got old age pensions. It was 21 years before we got unemployment insurance. We are still waiting for health insurance. So I suggest that if the Secretary of State has any more questions he might word them more appropriately.

Mr. Pickersgill: I notice the hon. gentleman did not answer my question.

Mr. Knowles: Because of this experience, some of us began early in this session trying to pin the government down, to secure a firm undertaking that the government would go through with the implementation of the Canada pension plan. The Minister of National Health and Welfare knows what she said when I asked her the first few times about the plan. She told me to contain myself in patience, that I would soon see the bill. I kept on asking her. I put questions to her on this subject on May 20 and May 22, and each time I was told the legislation would come soon. Then, on June 8 the hon. lady went to Hamilton and made a speech before a Liberal organization down there giving details of the Canada pension plan which was to be introduced in the House of Commons. A couple of days later I asked her if she would be good enough to tell the house what she had told the Liberals in Hamilton. She assured me that the details of the plan would soon be placed before us. On June 19, incidentally, the 59th day this government was in office—everyone knows how those first 60 days went by—the minister did succeed in giving notice of the resolution preceding the bill to set up the Canada pension plan. It appeared on our notice paper on June 20, which was the 60th day the present government was in office. And the government was very proud that it had got that far in the first 60 days. But all of this is to be seen in the light of the election promise that Liberal government would be prepared to act promptly in this matter.

On June 21, the resolution was transferred from government notices of motion to government orders and it looked as though we were making progress. A few days later the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) sent his famous letter to the premiers of the provinces about questions of social security beyond old age security and beyond the Canada pension plan, which seemed to me to suggest that a way was being opened up for delay. So I asked the Prime Minister on June 26 whether the result of his letter might be to cause delay in the implementation of the Canada pension plan. The right hon. gentleman assured me that such would not be the case. That is the story over a considerable period of time. There was