

*Social and Economic Security*

to family allowance or FISP, as the minister wants to call it. I wish the minister would not establish that cut-off line above which people do not get any family allowance at all. If he wants to make a difference—he is in power and I am not—he could make it the way he has with the old age security, establish a basic amount for each child that everyone gets on a universal basis and, if you will, have something more for those whose incomes are lower.

Another place where the demogrant or universal principle could be applied would be for mothers in the homes. I trust my colleague for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) is applauding this. I know she is—

**Mrs. MacInnis:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):**—for it is her idea and mine too. This is one area where we should now establish a demogrant, a universal program of payment as of right which would take care of many of the relief and welfare difficulties that face our people. It would do this on a basis that will be good for the morale of those homes, for it would be a matter of right. I would give it not just to the mothers who are part of the minister's working poor; I would give it to every mother who is at home raising her children in addition to what is paid to the children themselves. It would cost money, say some of my Conservative friends. Of course it would, but nothing in terms of the costs to the souls and spirits of our people because they live their lives in poverty and their children and grandchildren have to do the same.

There is a precise program. Put your family allowance, if you will, on at least a partly universal basis and pay it across the board and add to that a demogrant to the mothers who are at home or, for that matter, women who are at home, whether mothers or not. These are areas where we can start. The minister, I know, is thinking in the right direction because of the question he asked me. He would like to move in the direction of a universal grant to all the people of Canada. He is young enough; he will see that day. So shall I, for that matter, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Alexander:** That is questionable.

**Mr. Forrestall:** You have undermined your credibility—it is a question of 40 years.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** When I came here they told me we would never get the means test off the old age pension and that we would never get the amount of the pension up to \$40 a month. If you have seen these battles won as I have, you know you are on the right track; and if you stay at it you will see still further victories.

**Mr. Deachman:** And the Liberals have done all of it.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The Croll way is all wrong. He would wipe out old age security. He lost my support when he proposed that—but apart from the fact, he puts the whole of the solution to the problem of the poor on the basis that makes them all recipients of one big, grand welfare scheme. The Munro approach—at least the one he is implementing, not the one he really believes in—is to go for selectivity, to go for income tests and means tests. This has the effect of saying that we give money to people—why? Because they are mothers,

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

because they are wives, because they are a certain age, because they have lived in the country a certain length of time? No. Because they are poor. So they stay poor.

I suggest, therefore, that what we should do is extend the principle that has worked the best, the universal principle. My friend in the back row over there likes to boast of what the Liberals have done. They have done a lot through the pressure from this side of the House over the last 50 years, Mr. Speaker, but they know from their experience that the programs that have worked best are those that have been universal, those that have followed a demogrant principle. I say, for God's sake, for the sake of the people of this country and for our future, let us move still further in that direction.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. I must advise the minister that if he wants to ask a question at this time, because of the fact that the time allotted to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has expired he may only ask a question with the unanimous consent of the House. Would the House give the minister permission to ask a question?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**An hon. Member:** He needs to ask a lot of them.

**Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I should like to thank hon. members for allowing me time to ask this question. I asked the hon. member whether this universal benefit would be paid out at levels we have not yet attained—far from it—to everyone in Canada, and recover the money through taxes. This is putting an awful lot of money through the system. Once it is paid out we have to try to recover moneys of a nature we have never put through the tax system in Canada. There would be great problems inherent in implementing the recovery rates necessary at the high income levels for the benefits paid out. I imagine the hon. member has given some thought to the problems inherent in that type of approach, and I should like to hear his views.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, first of all may I say that the minister is quite right in his description of how I think the matter ought to work, namely, that the grants be paid universally and that the income tax be used to collect back from those who do not need it. The minister says that this involves a huge operation in terms of dollars. I hope I do not appear too much of a person out of the past if I say that I remember reading in *Hansard* that the late Hon. Charles Dunning said more or less the same thing to the late J. S. Woodsworth when he asked for a pension of \$20 a month—it was a good idea but the dollars involved would break the country. Yes, it is a big operation, this kind of money being paid out and coming back. I submit, however, that what it would do for the morale and spirit of our people and the vitality of our economy is worth it.

**An hon. Member:** Recycle it.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** My hon. friend says it is a form of recycling. If recycling works in other fields, it will work in this area too, as indeed it already has.