

The Address—Mr. S. Knowles

that such an authority is worth consideration by the government in that it would attempt, in all urban areas, to bring together under one authority the administration and operation of airports, harbours and railway facilities. In this way, I feel many of the problems which have been experienced in the Toronto region could be avoided and there would be a much more constructive approach to the needs of urban areas if such regional authorities were in existence.

In conclusion, I would emphasize that while we have great economic problems in this country—and I sincerely hope this House will deal with them at the earliest opportunity—we also have great urban problems. To this end, I would urge my colleagues and friends to the left, who so far have supported this government, to reconsider their position—

Mr. Peters: They are thinking about it.

Mr. Stevens: —because I can assure them that if they had walked the streets of my riding as I did during the past election campaign, they would have been impressed by the fact that voters in at least two out of three homes indicated they had no doubt about the way they intended to vote; they intended to vote against the Trudeau Liberal government. Their only indecision was whether to vote Conservative or NDP.

• (1530)

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, for the NDP now to lend support to the government is breaking trust with many voters who voted NDP in their earnest desire that the Trudeau government be removed from power. I noticed during certain of the NDP "justification" speeches with respect to the present axis between the Trudeau government and themselves that they indicated the Conservatives and Liberals are somehow alike. As a new member of this caucus, I would ask them to reconsider that belief. One day when I was in the chamber they referred to a previous government formed by the party to which I have the honour to belong, and indicated that in their opinion it was not unlike the present government. I would ask them to come up to the 1970s. For example, only 23 per cent of the present members of this caucus were in the caucus to which they referred. On the other hand, over 70 per cent of the members of the caucus across the floor from us were in the caucus of the government that was soundly defeated in the recent election. Ours is a new caucus. Give us a chance and we will produce results.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like, very briefly but most warmly, to underline the congratulations that have been extended to Your Honour on your election to the chair once again. It is good to have you presiding over the proceedings of this House.

Sir, from my point of view the most significant and most useful statement that has yet come to us in this session from the government side of the House was one that was uttered yesterday by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde). It is recorded on page 202 of *Hansard* for January 11. It reads as follows:

[Mr. Stevens.]

However I can assure hon. members that a substantial old age pension increase will be announced soon, and I hasten to add that it will not be a mere token increase.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, during this past week or so it has been extremely difficult to get precise statements out of the ministers opposite. It was a refreshing departure from that rule of non-disclosure for the Minister of National Health and Welfare to make it clear that there will soon be a measure to provide for a substantial increase in the old age pension.

I also want to commend the new minister on the speech that he made yesterday. I listened to it with interest, and I was pleased to note that he spent practically his entire time dealing with matters which come within the purview of his department. And I was also pleased that, whereas in the last four years we were told time and time again that proposals that we were making could not be considered, yesterday there seemed to be a willingness to listen, indeed a willingness to consider improvements in the whole field of social security.

This morning when I learned that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) was going to take part in this debate, I was naïve enough to hope that he would follow the pattern set by his colleague and that he would tell us of his plans for coping with the problems that come within the responsibility of the Department of Transport. They are many. Hon. members will not be surprised if I mention one in particular, namely, the problem of Canadian National pensions. I had hoped that the Minister of Transport would have something to say about this issue which is of wide concern across Canada today; but no, he chose to spend his entire time on matters completely removed from his own department; indeed, he spent his entire time on a speech which I suggest was a disaster for the party to which he belongs.

However, Sir, I return to the Minister of National Health and Welfare whose speech of yesterday I warmly welcome, and in particular I am glad to sense a willingness on the part of that minister, as revealed in his speech, to consider the problems in the field of social security that need to be dealt with just as soon as possible. With respect to the announced increase in old age pensions, I was pleased that although he said about certain other measures that they would have to wait until after certain federal-provincial conferences, or until after certain studies had been completed, that delay did not apply to the old age pension increase and that this is to be brought forward very soon.

It is because this attitude of greater receptiveness to ideas with regard to social security has been displayed by the Minister of National Health and Welfare that I think it is appropriate to set out in front of him, and in front of other ministers, a range of pension and other problems that are crying for solution. To a very large extent they are calling for solution because in the last four years the government thought they could be pushed under the rug, or pushed off till some date distant in the future.

First of all with respect to old age pensions, and in particular the Old Age Security Act, I want to say to the minister that we will hold him to that promise to make an