

The Address—Mr. Knowles

the old age security pension. The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas) pointed out that we would certainly be making a profit for the lives of our older people in this country if we were to take this action, and we insist that it is the first good deed that this twenty seventh parliament must do.

I should like to add to what my leader said last night, concerning the financing of an increase in old age security, a point which I sought to make in the last parliament. When in 1963, due to pressure from the opposition side of the house, the government agreed to raise the old age security pension from \$65 to \$75 a month, it insisted that it had to accompany that increase with an increase in the personal income tax which is levied for old age security. The increase was made, from 3 to 4 per cent.

During the months that followed we argued very strongly both for an increase in the amount of the pension to \$100 and for the lowering of the eligible age to 65. Through all of the discussions on those points both in the House of Commons and in the Canada Pension Plan committee, government spokesmen insisted that if either of these courses was taken there would have to be another increase in taxation at one point or another. However, after the government members on the Canada Pension Plan committee had turned down our motions in respect to these two propositions, the government came back into the house, showed a change of heart, and announced through the Prime Minister that the eligible age would be brought down to 65 a year at a time. This same government which told the Canada Pension Plan committee that that step could not be taken without an increase in taxation, when it took the step on its own accord, said it had sharpened its pencils, had looked at the growing productivity and at the results of the tax rates already in effect, and had decided that no further increase in taxation was necessary to effect that desirable change.

I suggest that the old adage "Where there's a will there's a way" applies in this case, and if this government can be persuaded as to the necessity of increasing the old age security pension, a way will be found to finance that increase. We call upon this parliament in these first votes which are going to take place in this House of Commons to express its clear and unequivocal opinion that this increase should be made, and that it should be made right away.

[Mr. Knowles.]

I shall come in a few moments to some of the arguments that are put up as to why parliament should not pass amendments of this kind, but before I do so may I refer briefly to one or two other matters in the social security field that I feel must have high priority in this parliament.

Along with the need to increase the old age security pension, we feel that we simply must get medicare in this parliament; indeed, that we must get legislation on this subject at this session of parliament. I was pleased to see the Prime Minister take a stance yesterday on this subject which was a little firmer than the one he took in Alberta during the election campaign. But even so I was greatly disturbed by some of the things he said on this subject, as recorded at page 72 of yesterday's *Hansard*.

Let me quote these words of the Prime Minister:

Surely that means that in the future the federal government should exercise great care in agreeing on joint programs with the provinces in which all the provinces do not participate.

I could read the rest of the paragraph, but the gist of the paragraph is in that sentence.

The Prime Minister seems to be telling us that there are programs—and medicare seems to be one of those he had in his mind—which it is not desirable to proceed with until all the provinces are ready to come in. My leader pointed out last night that if that position had been held to we probably would not have hospitalization across this country today, as we now have. We deplore that stand which the Prime Minister took yesterday. It is too much like the stand he took in Alberta during the election campaign.

We call upon the government to bring in legislation along the lines of the Hall Commission report, along the lines of the four cardinal principles which the Prime Minister announced last summer; to put that legislation on the statute books and to make it available forthwith to those provinces that wish to come in, even if they come in one by one. If we try to do it the other way it is going to take years and years before something is done. It is already almost 47 years since the Liberals first promised to do something in the field of health care. We think there should be no further delay.

Another item I feel we must start working on in this parliament is the question of finding a way to establish for our people a guaranteed annual income. We have long held in general terms in this country to the view that there should be a level of income