

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

I listened with interest to the minister's remarks summing up the discussion on item 1. She has her own inimitable way of putting people off, but she does not put me off by the suggestion that there is a refrain running through many of our speeches, the refrain of more money being wanted for this or that particular program. This item is a general administrative one covering the various programs that come under the heading of old age assistance and the various other pension benefits.

Despite what the minister said today, and despite the concentration being placed on the benefits that will flow from the Canada pension plan, we have not reached the end of the road with respect to old age security and the other pension programs that come under the responsibility of this department. When I heard the minister say that we should not be asking for these things because they all cost money in terms that she could not calculate, I could not help but recall that that was the kind of answer I got when I first came to the House of Commons some 22 years ago.

At that time the old age pension was \$20 a month. I was a very brave new member. I dared to suggest the pension should be increased to \$30 a month and was told by the minister of finance—because at that time the old age pension came under the Department of Finance, not under the department of pensions and national health as it was then known—the same thing that the minister said today, that it would cost such a huge sum of money, that it was impossible. Later, when I got really brave and went out on a limb and suggested the abolition of the means test, I almost expected to be certified because of the attitude displayed on the government side.

We have moved a long way since that day, but we are not at the end of the road in terms of providing security and dignity and decency for our older people, and for other members of our society who do have a claim on the affluence and the abundance of our times.

I recognize that the Canada pension plan if we get it, as I hope we will this year, and if it becomes operative in 1966, as I hope it will, is going to make a real contribution to this whole problem of security for people of older years and, in some cases, for people not quite so old in years. But the problems that are coped with by old age security, old age assistance, the Blind Persons Act and the Disabled Persons Act are still with us, and I urge the minister and her department, busy as they are with the Canada pension plan

[Mr. Knowles.]

and studying the Hall report, not to neglect to consider the needs for improvement in these other acts, for the benefit of all those people who will get nothing from the Canada pension plan because they are now 70 or over, or will be over 70 before it becomes operative. For all these people it is not good enough to provide them with just \$75 a month. That figure should be increased, as I said yesterday, to \$100.

There is also the whole question of reducing the eligible age. I know the Canada pension plan will make it possible, when it becomes fully operative, for people to draw \$51 a month at age 65 without a means test. That is good, but it will take several years before that point is reached, and to ask people in this latter part of the twentieth century to settle for \$51 a month for the rest of their lives surely is not consistent with what we are capable of doing.

I think I have read everything the minister has put out concerning the Canada pension plan, and I may say she has kept us pretty busy in that respect. I have also read the Liberal party literature with regard to pensions that was published in the last two election campaigns. I read the three white papers—the first one is getting a bit yellow and the second one a bit grey. I hope we can act on the third one while it is still white.

I read with interest the speech the minister was to have made in Toronto in September last, and which was made on her behalf by her parliamentary secretary. I read with interest the speech made some months ago in Kingston by the hon. member who is now the Minister of National Revenue, a speech which seemed to be an authoritative statement on the Canada pension plan. I have also read, though not every line of it, the actuarial report prepared by the government on the Canada pension plan. That was produced last year and in that document there appeared one statement I have not found anywhere else in all this literature, that is, an admission of the fact that even when the Canada pension plan becomes operative the old age security figure will not remain at \$75 a month, and that as time goes on it will have to go up even as adjustments are made to the Canada pension plan.

I had hoped that that admission which was contained in the actuarial report would have appeared in the white paper in one or other of its versions. It is not there yet, but so far as I am able to watch the minister's nods up and down and right and left as I speak, I gather she agrees with me that \$75 a