

Interim Supply

responsibility." That reminds me of a discussion that took place in the Senate chamber when the first old age pension legislation was before parliament. This happened to be the last time we had a Conservative majority in the Senate and it came out in the evidence that in the election of 1925 two labour members were in the position where they had to decide whether Canada was to have a Liberal or a Conservative government.

An hon. Member: Gad, what a choice!

Mr. Nicholson: It turned out that these two labour members wanted two things: They wanted old age pensions and they wanted unemployment insurance. Mr. Meighen, the only former prime minister now living, who was the leader of the Conservative party at that time, was not at all interested in either of these propositions. Mr. King apparently was not able to sell the idea of unemployment insurance but he was able to sell to his supporters the idea of old age pensions: So the first old age pension legislation came into this house because the member for Winnipeg North Centre at that time, the late Mr. Woodsworth—later leader of our party—and Mr. Heaps, then Labour member for Winnipeg, stood up for the old people of Canada.

An hon. Member: And that is the only reason, is it?

Mr. Nicholson: That is how we happen to have it. There is another chapter which I think should be drawn to the attention of the house when there was a very heated debate in the Senate chamber. I have the Senate *Hansard* for the year 1926 and in June 8 of that year Senator McMeans, a Conservative senator, was criticizing the Liberals for the humiliating position in which they found themselves, where they were allowing two labour members to run the country and to force this very objectionable legislation on the taxpayers of Canada.

An hon. Member: They are allowing one superman now.

Mr. Nicholson: I have found there was a Liberal in the Senate who made a very good speech considering the thinking of that day. Senator Lewis said:

I do not regard the bill at all as a socialistic measure or as a measure of charity. I put it on precisely the same basis as I would put the pension to a judge or a soldier, because I regard a mechanic, a factory worker, or a labourer in the field as just as much a servant of the state and nation as the judge or a soldier, and just as much entitled to consideration at the hands of the nation.

I submit that that was quite a constructive contribution to come from a senator who was a Liberal, and who was trying to stand up in the Senate for this legislation. However,

there was a senator from Prince Edward Island who was more critical—Senator McLean—and Senator Sir George Foster spoke as follows:

I am opposed to it, in the second place, because I do not think it is just or fair.

He was greatly concerned about what the cost was going to be and I find that this debate generated more heat, although not very much light, than any debate that has taken place for a long, long time.

When it was all over this first measure was killed because there were only 21 who stood up for it while 45 voted against it. That was a very large vote, taking into account the absenteeism in the other place.

I notice that one of the hon. senators who spoke against it was a Saskatchewan citizen, the late Senator Calder. After opposing this legislation he continued in the Senate and passed away recently at the age of 88. Checking the record in *Hansard* I find that for the last ten years his name did not appear in any of the reports. Of course he would have to appear here once a year in order to qualify for his indemnity—

Mr. Green: On a question of privilege. I do not think it is in order for an hon. member to attack a deceased senator in that way—a senator who served this country with great credit for many many years, first in the Northwest Territories, then in the province of Saskatchewan, and later in the dominion parliament, holding a very responsible position. And now the hon. member is making dirty, nasty, imputations against that senator's reputation. I think that is very much out of order.

Mr. Nicholson: I note the objection of the hon. member, and I will not pursue the matter. I was merely pointing out that he was one of the senators who blocked the passage of the old age pension legislation through this House of Commons. I think it is significant that this first legislation was blocked, and that the present official opposition of this country is on record as declaring that the economy of Canada will not stand the payment of \$75 a month to pensioners.

I suggest that any hon. member may wish to try the experiment of seeking rented quarters in any centre in Canada—the cheapest accommodation available—and after securing the accommodation necessary to provide shelter from rain, snow and frost, he or she should try to get enough food, balance the budget and meet all commitments after providing for medical and hospital care, from the amount that is left over.

I do not think any reasonable person would suggest that this very buoyant economy which