

## PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the house under standing order 40 deemed to have been moved.

### DOMINION-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE— POSSIBLE INCREASE IN OLD AGE SECURITY BENEFITS

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles).

**Some hon. Members:** Again?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** Now I understand.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, January 20, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 4489, I put a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) on the basis of a federal-provincial conference of welfare ministers that had been held some days earlier.

I asked the minister whether he would soon be making a statement as to the government's intentions regarding pensions, allowances, the guaranteed annual income, and so on. I concluded my question with these precise words:

Can he also state at an early date whether it is the government's intention this year to increase the basic amount of the old age security pension?

The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) gave me a reply containing about 12 lines, to the effect that the whole matter was under review by the government. Whereupon, I put to him this supplementary question:

Does that review include a study of the possibility of increasing the basic amount of the old age security pension?

The minister replied:

It is a factor which will be included in the review.

It is nice to know that in a general, academic way the question of the amount of the old age security pension is part of this general review which the Minister of National Health and Welfare is making of social welfare policy. As a matter of fact, we are getting so many of these reviews by the government it is just about time we set up a task force to review the review committees to see how they are making out.

I want to express tonight the belief that reviews do not make life any happier for the

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Center).]

old age pensioners of this country. We had something of a debate on this question under another heading between five and six o'clock this evening when hon. members on all sides said that what was proposed at that time was not enough, that we needed to take positive steps to improve the position of our old age pensioners. My question the other day related specifically to a positive step which I believe is a very urgent need, that of increasing the basic amount of the old age pension from the present figure of \$75 which has remained constant for several years, except for the 2 per cent annual adjustment.

One senses in this parliament great difficulty in getting any kind of response to these pension questions. Whether we are pleading the case of veterans living on war veterans allowances or drawing attention to the plight of retired civil servants or of old age pensioners generally, we are put off with answers to the effect that the matter is being considered, that the position is under review, and so on. Times are moving on, Mr. Speaker. Wages and prices are rising. For some, our society is becoming more affluent. I think it is no credit to our society, no credit to our government and no credit to this parliament if we cannot do something for our old age pensioners to keep them in the main stream of our society, and I put my question to the government very simply: is it not time that consideration was given to increasing the amount of the old age pension from that \$75 figure to a figure much higher? As I indicated earlier this session, I myself think the guaranteed income supplement should be incorporated into the basic pension and the whole amount raised to at least \$125 a month.

While we are asking for these matters to be considered, Mr. Speaker, we also have certain fears because of the occasions on which the government talks about passing various welfare programs over to the provinces. There was a suggestion earlier this session that in five years medicare would be turned over to the provinces. Question marks have been raised in connection with family allowances as well as other welfare and assistance programs. This makes some of us wonder whether the present government is dismantling the whole social security program which has been built up over the last 40 or 50 years.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare did say something the other day to members of the press which was somewhat reassuring. He was asked whether there was any likelihood of the old age security program being turned over to the provinces,