

Canada Pension Plan

we wish to see a comprehensive contributory pension plan brought in at the earliest opportunity. We want to see the bill and we want to see it at once.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, eight months ago tomorrow we took the first step in connection with the matter we are discussing tonight. It was on July 18 of last year that we debated a resolution similar to the one now before us. I expressed the view on that occasion that when we get upon our statute books legislation of the kind we are now discussing we will have taken one of the most important steps in the history of Canadian social legislation. I will make it clear as I go along that there are some aspects of the plan now before us which are inadequate, but in principle what we have before us is the proposal that we move into a new stage with respect to security in old age. Therefore, we support this measure.

Many years ago the idea was started that the government should do something about old age. Then a number of years ago we moved on and established the principle of universality when we provided for pensions under the Old Age Security Act to be payable to everyone at age 70, without a means test. But we still have to take the all important step of putting pensions for old age on a basis that will make those pensions adequate for retirement with dignity and security. We will not achieve that, Mr. Chairman, until we have, on top of a flat rate benefit, an earnings-related program. In principle that is what the Canada pension plan proposes; that is why we are in support of the Canada pension plan and want to see it enacted at the earliest possible date.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles: I have referred briefly to the debate of eight months ago tomorrow. Most of us must recall it. Some things have changed; some things have not. I made some notes during the supper hour, Mr. Chairman, as to what I might say when opening my remarks. When a speaker is third in line he should not make notes, because things change as you go along. However, one of the notes I made was to take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister of National Health and Welfare on her speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles: I do so quite gladly. Last July I had to chide her for the terrible partisan note that she imported into her speech on that occasion. But today it was not there. Today she presented the facts of the case and did it well. I congratulate her on the speech she made this afternoon. I also want to express my warmest congratulations to

those in the minister's department who prepared the white paper which the minister tabled this afternoon and which will be an appendix to today's *Hansard*. I regarded the white paper which was tabled last July as a very useful document. I believe the white paper that has been tabled today is an even more useful one. It gives more details than the white paper gave last time; and I suggest to those who are honestly desirous of knowing what is in the Canada pension plan, as well as to the critics who say they want information about it, that they read and study the white paper. I would even offer this suggestion to the hon. member for Perth, that he include in his reading the white paper that we have had since five o'clock this afternoon. In any case, Mr. Chairman, I welcome the tabling of the white paper. I hope it will receive very wide distribution, for it does answer many of the questions the hon. member for Perth asked tonight and it answers many of the questions that people are putting to us about the Canada pension plan.

There are other questions that we will have to discuss either in committee of the whole house or in the special committee to which the bill will be referred; but I suggest, in all fairness, that we have been given a good deal of information about this proposed piece of legislation. In fact, I suggest that when one realizes that generally we do not get the details that are in a bill until we get the bill itself, on this occasion we have been given a good deal of information in advance.

Another note that I put down on paper during the supper hour was to congratulate the hon. member for Perth. That, of course, was on the basis of what he said during the five minutes in which he spoke between five minutes to five and five o'clock. Most of the members who are here now were here then, and I am sure all will agree with me that we welcomed and were heartened by the tone of his remarks. He made it clear that the members of the Conservative party were 100 per cent behind a Canada pension plan. He said there were no ifs or buts about it. He said there had been enough discussion and that the Conservatives felt there need not be endless debate on the resolution, but we could get the resolution through and thus get the bill introduced without delay. I was greatly encouraged by that. It has been my fear for some time that the way this session has been going we would not get this resolution through, that we would not get the bill before Easter, and that this would jeopardize the future progress of the plan. From what the hon. member for Perth said between five minutes to five and five o'clock I was encouraged to believe that we might get this