

The Address—Mr. Knowles

per cent, and it increased Great Britain's trade with the dominions 41 per cent. Not only that, but Canada increased her foreign trade with the countries on the seven seas.

A magnificent trade exhibition was held in Toronto under the auspices of the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe). We were able to see what Australia, New Zealand and other dominions were offering. We should trade with our sister dominions as much as possible and re-establish the system of preferential trade. I believe the future of Canada depends on that. This is what Sir John Macdonald said in 1844:

I, therefore, need scarcely state my firm belief that the prosperity of Canada depends upon its permanent connection with the mother country.

And then in 1891 he said:

For a century and a half this country has grown and flourished under the protecting aegis of the British crown. Under the broad folds of the Union Jack, we enjoy the most ample liberty, we govern ourselves as we please, and at the same time we participate in the advantages which flow with association of the mightiest empire the world has ever seen. As for myself, my course is clear. A British subject I was born and a British subject I will die.

That spirit still lives and breathes in this country today, no matter what may be said to the contrary.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, since it appears that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) is not to make his statement on the exchange situation until nine o'clock, I rise to speak in support of the amendment moved by my leader, the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell), which reads as follows:

We regret, however, that Your Excellency's advisers have failed to propose legislation to remove the means test from the old age pension.

Frankly, I do not see how any hon. member of this house can vote against that amendment. A proper old age pension, free of the means test, is now part of the platform of every political party in this country. I remind hon. gentlemen opposite in particular that, during the recent federal election campaign, Liberal after Liberal contended that that was one of the things he would fight for if elected, namely, the abolition of the means test. I heard over the radio, from the lips of Liberals in the part of the country from which I come, the statement in strong terms, "The means test must go." Those who gave expression to that sentiment during the election campaign have the opportunity to vote that way when the vote is called on this amendment. I am sure that many Liberal members of this house who are new to this chamber will, when they look at the amendment, say that that is something that they want to vote for. I hope that

[Mr. Church.]

they will vote the way they really feel, the way their constituents expect them to vote.

This whole question of a proper old age pension is something that it has taken time to popularize in this country. When old age pensions were first being proposed on the floor of this house in the middle twenties there was strong criticism of the idea. As hon. members know, the first Old Age Pensions Act that was passed in this house was turned down in the other place. In the meantime, largely through the efforts of my predecessor, the late Mr. J. S. Woodsworth, former member for Winnipeg North Centre, and of this party across the years, it has been accepted by the Canadian people that as part of our national economy there should be a proper retirement plan.

I have no doubt that one reason why many people voted Liberal on June 27 was that they felt even the Liberal party had become convinced of the need for a proper old age pension plan. They felt that if given another chance in addition to all those chances they had had so far the Liberals would bring in a proper old age pension plan. I know, as do all hon. members, that at the present time we are facing grave international problems with which this house must cope, but I insist that we must not let our concern for those broad international problems blind us to the necessity of dealing with our domestic problems and of setting our internal house in order in the best possible way we can. High on the list of our domestic problems is the need for a proper retirement plan.

As hon. members who have been here before are aware, I have given most of my time in the speeches I have made on the address in reply to the speech from the throne to this question. Through the years I have tried to document our case with figures which I have been able to secure from the bureau of statistics, from the Department of National Health and Welfare and from other sources. Hon. members will recall that in March, 1948, I gave figures which I had obtained from the bureau of statistics, particularly from a report having to do with the changes in our population structure, which showed that through the years we are becoming a nation with a larger number of older people. To be specific, the figures given out by the bureau of statistics show that whereas in 1941 only 6.7 per cent of our Canadian people were sixty-five years of age and over, by 1971 10.1 per cent of the people in this country will be sixty-five years of age and over. In other words, the necessity for grappling with this problem increases as the years come and go.

That same bureau of statistics pointed out in that same report that, not only is the per-