

The Address—Mr. Knowles

Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) was so determined to tell us that things like war veterans allowance would not affect his income supplement that people got the wrong impression, but they are now learning in the fine print from the war veterans allowance people that although they can get the old age pension supplement despite war veterans allowance, they lose part of their war veterans allowance, or all of it, if they get the old age security supplement.

The same sort of conflict is taking place between the federal and provincial authorities. Each one is blaming the other and I suggest this is a far cry from the principle of dignity in old age which parliament established when it decreed that the old age pension in its entirety should be free of a means test of any kind. This could have been avoided in the last session if the government had agreed to make the \$105 a month payable to all pensioners as a matter of right, without any means test, and I think this is something we still must do. As a matter of fact the matter can be solved quite readily if the government would agree to a resolution standing in my name which is now on the order paper. It is No. 19 and it reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should give consideration to amending the Old Age Security Act to provide for the full amount of the income supplement provided thereunder to be incorporated into the basic pension, and for the eligible age to be lowered immediately to 65, so that all persons in Canada 65 years of age or over who meet the residence requirements will receive the full pension of \$105 per month without any income test, the full amount of the old age security pension thus being recognized as a matter of right.

While I am dealing with pensions, Mr. Speaker, and again thinking in terms of the needs of people who are with us here and now, I urge the government to act immediately on the report that was made on the last day of the last session by the joint committee on the public service of Canada, calling for increases in the pensions of retired civil servants. It has taken a long while to get this recommendation placed before parliament and the government. I hope the government will act on it immediately.

There are other groups that should receive similar consideration. I think for example of retired pensioners of the C.N.R. whose position is very similar to that of retired civil servants, and I hope when we get action for the one group we will get action for the other as well.

[Mr. Knowles.]

I am glad to see at long last that there is a reference in the speech from the throne to unemployment insurance amendments. I hope we will not have to wait very long for them. In particular I insist that the rates of benefit provided under that legislation, which have not been changed for the last eight or nine years, should be increased without further delay, and so should the ceiling on the amounts under which people can pay into the unemployment insurance fund.

Medicare is again something members may feel we are through talking about, because it was finally passed during the last session, but it is still a fact that for all the talk about the great century that is ahead of us, the tendency of this government is to put things off. July 1, 1968 may not seem so far away now, some 13 or 14 months, but I insist that is too long to ask our people to wait for the implementation of medicare. I insist that the reasons that prompted the government to delay implementation from July 1, 1967, to July 1, 1968, do not stand, and that the government should use the provision that was written into the act to bring that legislation into effect at an earlier date. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, what are we to take from offers to write such provisions into measures that we are debating? What is the point of such amendments if no use is made of them?

In the same vein I would like to refer to something that the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Muir) asked about on orders of the day this morning, and which I had intended to raise. When we were debating the medical care legislation, we had before us at great length the question of including optometry and other paramedical services under the provisions of that legislation. After a while we got an amendment, and the amendment says clearly that certain other services can be added if an agreement is made between a province and the federal government. When asked about it in the course of the debate, the minister made it clear that this was in the same category as the legislation generally, that there was no need for all or for a majority of the provinces to agree, that just as the legislation itself as a whole could come into effect in one province if only one province agreed to it, so these additional services could be added by an agreement between any one province and the federal government.

That is in the act. It is in the statement that the minister made when we were debating it; but now when it becomes an issue, when some of the provinces have appealed to the