

MacEachen) to Paul Martin. He says that they are really talking the way that Mackenzie King talked.

You know, Mr. Speaker, Mackenzie King dealt with the election propaganda charge in a manner that only he could get away with. That legislation was before us in June and July of 1944. He stood up with all the solemnity he was capable of mustering, and he was always pretty solemn, and said, "This is not an election promise; I have written into this bill that these payments will not come into effect until July 1, 1945, and everyone knows that under the constitution there will have to be an election before then." So, this was not election bait. The bill just happened to pass in 1944, and it just happened that an election was called in June, 1945, and the Liberals were able to say, "We have got this piece of legislation through, and you will get the benefits on July 1." No, it was not election propaganda—by no means. Good old Mackenzie King!

**Mr. Douglas:** They cannot say that this time.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** As I say, 1944 was a dramatic year and interest in the bill was keen. Attendance was good. It is noticeable, as we talk about this bill on Friday afternoon, that although there are quite a few people in the galleries, there are not many members in the House, even though this will have far reaching implications. It changes not only one of the basic principles of the Family Allowances Act, as put on the statute books in 1944, but taken with the guaranteed income supplement and statements made by the minister, it pushes still further ahead the principle of selectivity instead of the principle of universality. Actually, this government is changing the whole approach to social security programs that Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent built up over several decades. For the moment, I shall concede that the way we should approach this matter is debatable. I have my views and the minister has his, and we can still talk to each other despite our differences. But I think it is unfortunate that, when so major a piece of legislation is before us as this legislation, there seems to be so little interest in it on the part of members of the House of Commons. I am not complaining about the number of members who happen to be here while I am speaking. I am thinking of how small the attendance was when the minister himself brought in this legislation.

I should like to say a word now about the way in which the minister and the government are perverting their own white paper technique. I concede that under our system of responsible government, the government has the right within its council chamber to work out its legislation, lay it before the House in final form and to say that it shall stand or fall on the basis of that legislation. That is the kind of responsible government we have, and that is the way the prerogatives and the initiatives of government work. Yet, it is this very government that said it wanted to change all that, that said it wanted to develop the concept of participatory democracy and to develop the idea of involvement—

**Mr. McGrath:** Ha!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** —of the people and of parliament in the decision-making process. Mr.

### *Family Income Security Plan*

Speaker, those are not my words. Those are the words of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). He stresses all the time words like "decision making process", "participation" and "involvement". This really is as nonsensical as some of the things Mackenzie King used to say. And what did the minister do? He brought down a white paper entitled, "Income security for Canadians" and tabled it on November 30, 1970. It had in it a number of sections dealing with a number of areas. The two main ones were old age security and guaranteed income security for families.

The idea behind a white paper is that the government puts its ideas before parliament and before the country in a tentative way, presumably to let us participate in making the final decision. I thought when we got the white paper on income security, that that was what we were to do. I thought we were to be given a chance to participate in the making of the final decision. Everyone knows what happened. What happened to the old age security portion of the white paper is a matter of history.

As I say, the white paper was tabled on November 30, 1970. The bill to amend the Old Age Security Act, Bill C-202 in that session, was given first reading the next day, December 1. It was called for second reading on December 2. It went through all stages in the House, was given third reading and passed on December 17. It went through the Senate and was given royal assent on December 18. There was no practice of the white paper technique with regard to old age security changes at all: we got the white paper one day, the next day the process of making the change forecast in the white paper was started, and 17 days later it became law.

• (1500)

**Mr. Munro:** That bill was not necessarily the last word in the old age pension scheme; you said that yourself.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** My good friend, that is the finest thing you have said today. I hope *Hansard* recorded it. That bill is not the last word.

**Mr. Munro:** No, and we say it in the white paper.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** It is nice to have it confirmed. I wish the minister would act on that.

**Mr. Munro:** Have you now changed your mind about the white paper technique?

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** No, but the government has altered the technique. The things that this white paper proposes respecting old age security were enacted immediately, without any chance of parliament to discuss them as white paper proposals. I thought, with respect to income security for families, that the white paper technique would be carried through, Mr. Speaker. But today is March 24, 1972, this white paper was tabled on November 30, 1970—a year and four months ago—and in all that time it has not been referred to a committee of the House of Commons. We have had no opportunity in committee to discuss the proposed changes respecting family allowances. We have had no opportunity to take part in the participatory process that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said he was introducing to make things better in parliament.