

The Address—Mr. Knowles

subsequent occasion this session to speak on the subject of old age pensions, I certainly would not have passed up the opportunity to do so. However, I want to say that I agree with a number of statements the hon. member has made. In particular I was glad to hear him support the proposition that the means test should be removed at age 65. I earnestly hope that it will not be long until this parliament takes that step. I agree with him also in his contention that once a person goes on the old age pension, particularly under our new legislation, he should be entitled to draw that pension even if he finds it necessary to move to some warmer climate than that which we experience in this country, which is a bit severe for some of our older people.

While I agree with statements of that nature which were made by the hon. member for Cartier, I must say that I cannot go along with him in his complete acceptance of our old age pension legislation as evidence that this parliament has wholly implemented the fifth commandment or in his suggestion that by passing the Old Age Security Act Canada has made it clear that she has not forsaken her aged citizens. When we ask our older people, particularly those who have nothing else, to get along on \$40 a month—even when we have removed the means test and even when we call it old age security instead of an old age pension—I want to say that we really are forsaking a great many of our older people. As I pointed out in the other debates which are now closed, more than 200,000 Canadians 70 years of age and over are already drawing the full \$40 a month; and for them there will be no increase whatsoever as a result of the legislation which we passed at this session. Though we welcome most enthusiastically the steps that have been taken by this parliament, for they are signs of progress, may I point out that there are further steps still to be taken; and they should be taken now, not after many of the older people, whom we are called upon by the fifth commandment to honour, have passed on because we have not given them enough to live on.

I agree with the hon. member for Cartier, and I welcome his support of the proposal that the means test should be removed at age 65. I hope that he will support some of the rest of us in our contention that the amount of the pension should be increased to a figure of at least \$60 a month, which is a minimum under today's conditions.

As I indicated when I rose to my feet, the subject now before the house is the sub-amendment that was moved on November 7 by the hon. member for Acadia, asking that

something be done about the war veterans allowance, and in particular asking that something be done at this session of parliament. This is indeed a session which has had to deal with many important issues. The previous speaker and I have just had something to say about one of those important issues, namely old age security. The question of inflation and the high cost of living has been much before parliament at this session. Similarly there are other matters of great importance before hon. members, but I suggest that one of the hottest subjects is this question of the war veterans allowance. As hon. members know, before we came to Ottawa for the session which began on October 9, the Legion and other veterans organizations were in touch with practically all members of parliament, asking us to make sure that their representations to the government were given consideration at this session. I felt, as I am sure most hon. members did, that their requests were most reasonable. There was nothing exaggerated in what they requested. They asked for an increase in the amount of the disability pension commensurate with the increase in the cost of living since those rates were last determined. They also asked for an increase in the amount of the war veterans allowance. Their proposal in that connection was that the maximum for a single veteran, which is now \$40.41 a month, should be increased to \$50 a month; and that the allowance for a married veteran, which is now \$70.83 a month, should be increased to \$100 a month.

I repeat what I said a moment ago. There is certainly nothing exaggerated about a request of that kind, namely that our so-called burnt-out pensioners should be given an allowance of \$50 a month if single, or \$100 a month if married. In my view the Legion and other veterans organizations would have been quite justified in asking for larger amounts than those which were included in their representations.

As hon. members know, in the speech from the throne there was nothing to indicate that anything was going to be done about either of those requests. The result was that from all sides of the house a great deal was said about these matters right from the very day that parliament opened. In due course that discussion brought from the government, on October 19, an announcement by the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe). That announcement is to be found at page 197 of *Hansard*, to the effect that the government had decided to do something at this session about the disability pension. As hon. members know, we have since had a further announcement as to the amounts of the