

The Address—Mr. Gillis

order paper at this time. I thought he was a better politician. In the near future I expect that that particular thing will boomerang on him pretty badly. Many hon. members remember the issue as to the maintenance of price controls. The same Minister of National Health and Welfare was the chairman of a committee that was handed the job of getting all the facts on that matter and making recommendations to the house. In the meantime price controls went down the drain, the report was written, and I think I am safe in saying that seventy-five per cent of the members of this house never read it. Nevertheless it was a way of getting clear of an obligation which the government should have assumed, and I am afraid the same thing is happening in connection with the abolition of the means test.

Yesterday the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) referred to this when he said that it was part of the program for the institution of old age pensions on a contributory basis. However, that has been part of the program for a long time. I remember reading it first in 1919 when it emanated from a convention of the Liberal party which was held in that year. There have been two wars since that time, the world has been torn to pieces, conditions have changed drastically, and as far as they have gone with that pension program is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare to place a resolution on the order paper to pass it over to a committee to study the matter and make a report to the house.

I have seen this done several times in the past. Questions have been shelved and taken out of the realm of public discussion and then nothing has been done about them. Something should be done at this time about this matter. The argument will be advanced that it will cost more money, but I do not think anyone should get up in this house and talk that way any more. We can remember when prior to the war that was the stock argument against many questions that were raised—where will we get the money? But it did not take very long to find where to get the money when war broke out. We were able to take the jobless off the streets and put them in uniform; we were able to provide the planes, tanks and all the rest of it. That money is still around. It is a question of the members of this house, regardless of the section they may represent, having the courage to stand up here and say this is a job that should be done. This is not a question of planning and that kind of stuff; it is a matter of honesty, of having the courage of your convictions, of taking your position in this house and saying that the means test in connection with old age pensions is one of the greatest blots on the

[Mr. Gillis.]

history of Canada today, that it should be removed, and as far as we are concerned we are going to see that this is done.

The money is there. Put on the excess profits tax again, perhaps fifty per cent lower than it was during the war. You will get sufficient money to pay the old age pension without the means test. Why all the argument about it? The little bit of money that would accrue to old age pensioners as additional income would merely create additional purchasing power in the hands of Canadian citizens. It would only provide the necessities of life, but it would stimulate your machinery of production and provide additional markets. Right today we are screaming about markets for our products. Here is an internal market that we can create, and all the money will travel back to where it first came from.

It is a lot of nonsense to talk about appointing a committee to study the matter. Surely the members of this house have as much courage as some of our big industrialists. I have on my desk a letter written by the president of Dominion Steel and Coal, one of the greatest employers of labour in Canada. No other corporation in this country employs as many people as does Dominion Steel and Coal, with all its ramifications across the country. The president of that organization, speaking on behalf of the coal company and its subsidiaries, stated definitely just a few weeks ago that as far as his company is concerned it believes the means test should be abolished immediately. They have a non-contributory industrial pension scheme of their own. It does not amount to very much, perhaps \$30 a month to a man who has been employed for forty years and who retires at the age of sixty-five, but it is something. But because a man has that little pension, given through the charity of that corporation, it militates against him in obtaining the old age pension that is paid today. So the president of this company thinks it is unfair and unreasonable, and that the means test should be abolished. Surely the members of this house are just as humanitarian as the president of Dosco. That company is a big taxpayer, but the president of the corporation says the means test should be abolished. There is no necessity for taking it over to the railway committee room, calling in experts and so on. We have done that sort of thing year in and year out. The necessity is there; the money is there; the people of Canada are demanding it. I think it is time the members of this house said, "We are going to vote for it and authorize the government to do it," because if this country cannot afford to provide its aged people with the bare means of subsistence we have no right to say that we are a great nation, that we are