

*Sale of Polymer*

As I say, that is a perfectly proper objective for an opposition party, but I wish it were stated honestly instead of our being handed all this hypocrisy about a certain concern for public ownership and a certain concern for the principles of the NDP.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The fact of the matter is that if this motion that is before the House at present were to carry at 9.45 tonight, we would not sit in this chamber tomorrow. True, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) would have two options open to him. He could decide tomorrow to resign and to recommend to the Governor General that he invite the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) to be prime minister. Somebody says, "The same breed of cats". But he also has a constitutional right, which I suspect he would exercise, of calling an election, and instead of meeting here tomorrow to do certain things that I will talk about at eight o'clock, the game, so far as this parliament is concerned, would be over.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order. It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

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**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

[English]

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, during the few minutes before six o'clock that I had the floor I commended the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain for having made clear to the House what this motion is all about. He did so in his concluding sentence when he called on the members of the House tonight to vote this administration out. As I said when I was on my feet before six o'clock, this is a perfectly laudable objective. I wish the people of Canada had done it on October 30 last. But I question very strongly, and I think the people of Canada stand behind us on this, that this is the night to do it.

As I hope I made clear from the references to past history which I made this afternoon, if the motion of the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) is carried at a quarter to ten tonight, the government will have been denied the confidence of the House, will have been denied the right to proceed with its two supply bills that are on the order paper, and this House will not meet tomorrow. In such a case the Prime Minister will have to make up his mind what to do, whether to turn the reins of office over to the Leader of the Opposition or to ask for dissolution. I suspect that in light of the political facts of the present period, what he would do would be to seek dissolution. So, sir, what we are voting on tonight is the very simple question, and I put it in its simplest terms: What are we going to do tomorrow, Tuesday, March 27?

It has been announced several times that if this House meets tomorrow, the order of business will be the report

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

stage and third reading of the War Veterans Allowance Act amending bill, and the bill to amend the Old Age Security Act. Since both of those bills are thus almost at their concluding stages, it is a fair prospect that they could both be passed by the House by tomorrow night, if the House sits. But if the motion that is before the House tonight is carried by an irresponsible majority, we will not sit tomorrow and those two bills will not be dealt with and will not be passed. What does that mean? Let us look at this in very practical terms. It means that we would go into an election campaign, which presumably would conclude toward the end of May or early in June. It usually takes two or three months after an election is over before parliament is called together again. This means—

**An hon. Member:** This is all supposition.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Never mind supposition. History makes clear what would happen. This means that the old age pensioners and the war veterans, who at the moment have the right to expect certain increases in their pensions at the end of the month of April, will not get those increases at best until some time this fall. The passing of this motion denies for several months \$13.39 a month to every one of Canada's 1,800,000 old age pensioners, and it also denies increases to the 80,000 or so Canadians who are in receipt of the war veterans allowance. That figure of 80,000 includes veterans, veterans' widows, and other veterans' dependents. In the case of those who are single, it would deny them an increase of \$20 a month and in the case of those who are married it would deny them an increase of \$30 a month.

That is what this vote is all about tonight, and let not my hon. friends in the Progressive Conservative Party offer their new interest in public ownership as the reason for the motion and try to say that that is what it is all about. And let not those who report the proceedings in this House miss the main and essential feature, that what we are voting on is whether we do business in this place tomorrow or whether we follow the political gamesmanship of today and go into an election campaign.

We in this party do not have continuing confidence in those who form the government. We tried our best to best them last October, and we will try again. But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Canada elected the parliament which is here. They sent four different parties to this House. They put us into a minority situation, and we believe they expect us to do business. We believe they expect us to make this parliament work and we are convinced that the people of Canada are sick and tired of the political gamesmanship being carried on, by the official opposition in particular. They have the absolute and constitutional and procedural right to put down the kind of motion they put down today, to move non-confidence in the government and to do so for any reason they want. But don't ask us to swallow it. Don't ask us not to realize it is nothing more or less than a trick, because we are a group of members who feel we have some responsibility, particularly to Canada's 1,800,000 old age pensioners and to the 80,000 Canadians who are in receipt of war veterans allowance in one form or another.

There are other things that are in the offing, Mr. Speaker. My leader, the hon. member for York South (Mr.