

The Address—Mr. Fleming

his government practised in 1945 and 1946 when it wrecked the conference by its stiff-necked, take-it-or-leave-it attitude. I commend the Prime Minister for his change in attitude and tactics at this time, and to the extent that his tactics have changed and he has abandoned that stiff-necked, take-it-or-leave-it attitude we may look forward hopefully to the kind of agreement, the necessity for which we of the Progressive Conservative party have been pleading.

When the Prime Minister undertakes to refer to the 1945 proposals of his government to that dominion-provincial conference he had better check up next time on exactly what those proposals were, because if ever a man was completely mistaken in what he was talking about it was the Prime Minister when speaking about these proposals in the house two days ago. It was in the course of the Prime Minister's remarks referring to that portion of the amendment of my leader which condemns the government for its failure to take any proper steps in the direction of bringing about in Canada a national system of contributory old age pensions which will permit the elimination of the means test. When questioned about this point the Prime Minister undertook to say to the house that it was impossible today to eliminate the means test. He said that you could not have the elimination of the means test without a contributory system. He may have been right in that, but he was completely wrong in saying that the proposals of his government in 1945 for a change in old pensions and the elimination of the means test were based upon a contributory scheme because you will look in vain, sir, through these proposals of the government of Canada submitted to that conference in 1945 and 1946, for so much as a syllable about any contributory scheme. On the contrary, you will find the federal government proposing the elimination of the means test, the very thing that the Prime Minister says is impossible today, the very thing the impossibility of which he marshalled figures in this house two days ago to prove.

At page 38 of his own government's proposals we find words like these:

... it is proposed that the federal government would establish a system of national old age pensions entirely financed and administered by the federal government, and paid at the uniform rate of \$30 per month . . . to men and women aged seventy and over in all parts of Canada.

Then he goes on to talk about the benefit of partial recovery through income tax, the very thing he argued against in this house on Monday last. When are we going to get

[Mr. Fleming.]

a little consistency on the part of the Prime Minister? Further down the page there are these words:

The principal feature of the proposed national old age pensions is the elimination of the means test after reaching age seventy.

Again we find the following:

The removal of the means test would make it possible for these pensions to be administered by the federal government alone on a uniform national basis, without the necessity for provincial participation, and would therefore considerably relieve provincial finances.

Yet the Prime Minister comes along and attempts to refute, without realizing it, every syllable of the proposals that his government made in 1945. He says that the means test cannot be eliminated. He also says today that you must have provincial participation, when in 1945 he, as a member of the government, was saying: If you adopt our policy with regard to old age pensions for those seventy years of age and over, without a means test, you will not require provincial participation. It is about time, Mr. Speaker, that we had more frankness and knowledge on the part of the government as to this problem. We do not want them trying to push this problem aside again with the kind of fallacious argument and mistake on the facts that we heard in this house from the Prime Minister two nights ago.

What have we got from the government at this session in the way of a proposal for dealing concretely and resolutely with this problem? We simply have a proposal that we appoint another committee to get some information. In this country and in this parliament today the lack is not one of information. There is plenty of information. What is required is a little courage, a willingness on the part of the government to act, and some honesty in keeping promises made to the people.

So far as time permits, I wish to mention two other subjects, communism and the rule of law. As to communism I can only conclude from a statement made by the Prime Minister in the house on February 20 that he considers no action necessary. Referring to action in the light of communist activities he says at the bottom of page 63 of *Hansard*:

But when action requires to be taken, we think that we shall have the courage . . . to take it . . .

The Prime Minister did not indicate that the government is taking any action today. He had plenty of opportunity to indicate to the house and to the people of Canada any action that was being taken. In all fairness to the Prime Minister we can only conclude that no government action is considered necessary in the light of the activities of