

The Address—Mr. Johnston

pensioners do not contribute toward the cost of their pensions now. Every time they buy an article they make a substantial contribution to the revenues of this country through the payment of indirect taxation. When this matter is considered in committee I hope all these points will be taken into consideration and that a recommendation such as I have suggested will be brought in.

There is one other point I want to mention, though my time is passing very rapidly; that is the means test in regard to the old age pension. I believe that the means test should be eliminated. It may be that during the first stages of the inauguration of this non-contributory plan without a means test we will have to move slowly, so it may be necessary to alter that position in some respects; but I shall deal with that in just a moment. I was amazed at the remarks of the hon. member for Maple Creek (Mr. Studer) on this matter, as they appear at page 252 of *Hansard*:

I believe that everyone in this country, regardless of party, is in favour of the elimination of the means test.

May I say right off the bat that the hon. member is due to be disillusioned. Here again the people of Canada probably were fooled, because all parties in this house do not agree with the elimination of the means test. One party that does not agree is the Liberal party.

**An hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. Johnston:** Who said that? It sounds like someone from the west. I want to point out that the Liberal party in western Canada, to be exact the Liberal party in Alberta, does not believe in the removal of the means test. I do not hear any interjections, though I waited for them.

**An hon. Member:** Baloney.

**Mr. Johnston:** Baloney, is it? I can assure you that anything coming from the Liberal party in the west is baloney, and everyone out there knows it. I have a clipping here from the *Calgary Herald* of January 4, 1950, headed "Liberals favour means test." You will be surprised to learn who were at the meeting; but let me read the clipping:

The Edmonton Liberal association Tuesday night approved a resolution to be presented at the party's provincial convention next month that the annual convention be held either in Calgary or Edmonton each year.

The association defeated an amendment to a pensions resolution, one of many passed, that would have urged abolition of the means test. The resolution called for bringing old age pensions to the same level as those in British Columbia.

So at that meeting it was moved that the means test be abolished; but the Liberal organization as such, in convention, defeated that resolution. Even those from eastern

Canada should know better than to trust the Liberals from the west; but now we all know that the Liberal party in Alberta, not as individuals but as a party, stands for the maintenance of the means test. Let me quote further:

Another resolution called on the Alberta government to relax some of the provisions of its part in the federal hospitalization plan.

The provincial hospitalization plan is endeavouring to provide hospitalization for anyone anywhere in the province at a cost of a dollar a day, but the Liberal party in Alberta is against that. And do you know who were at the meeting? This should be of interest to hon. members. The report states:

Fred Macdonald and George Prudham, Liberal M.P.'s for Edmonton east and west, addressed the meeting.

Now let us get it straight. The Liberal party is not in favour of removing the means test; so when the hon. member for Maple Creek says everyone in this country, regardless of party, is in favour of the elimination of the means test he does not know what he is talking about. Then he went on:

If it is to be eliminated and there is not sufficient money available to carry the additional burden of old age pensions, what particular social service could those who moved the amendment offer to reduce the burden of providing additional pensions for the aged?

Now, it would seem that we were in a rather bad state. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) told us a moment ago how much we could produce in this country, and what a wealthy country it was. Then, a Liberal member gets up and says that if we eliminate the means test, we must eliminate some other social service.

Then, he goes on to say:

There is only one way of carrying old age pensions without a means test, and that is to increase production.

Where has the member been all this time? The Prime Minister told him something about production when he spoke on February 20. It is recorded at page 55 of *Hansard*, and reads as follows:

Our gross national product, that is the total value of all goods and services produced in the country, has tripled. Our foreign trade is nearly four times what it was in 1939.

Do you want to increase it any more, before we give the old age pensioners a sufficient amount to keep body and soul together?

Then, the Prime Minister goes on:

Those gains are striking in themselves, and they are striking in comparison with what has happened in other countries.

As a matter of fact, I believe the gross national product was something like \$16 billion.