

The matter was investigated in 1924 and 1925, and in 1926 we introduced the bill. In introducing that resolution, J. E. Fontaine, Liberal member for Hull, said:

I do not wish, Mr. Speaker, to raise a political question out of this resolution; I am fully confident that hon. members of this house, whether they sit on your right or on your left, will consider it on its merit, but I hope I shall be permitted to say that it is an essentially Liberal idea and that it would be proper for the Liberal party to carry it out. We on this side of the house should consider that wish expressed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1916 and embodied in a resolution at the great convention of the Liberal party in 1919. . . .

Now, take what happened. That bill was passed. The very arguments used the other evening by the Minister of Finance, that it will cost too much; that it should be contributory; that it is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, were the arguments used by the Tory opposition and the senators who by a large majority vetoed that bill which was presented to the electors in the election of 1926, along with the great constitutional issue of whether or not the Prime Minister's advice must be taken by the governor general, and the electors of Canada were told that if the Liberals were elected that bill would be passed, and that if the senate dared to veto it again, the senate would be reformed.

What happened? The Liberals were returned. One of the first things they did was to introduce that bill. The bill was passed unanimously and accepted by the senate, and when one of the hon. members rose in his place and asked the then Minister of Labour, the Hon. Peter Heenan, if he was aware that the bill had passed the senate, his reply was, "Yes; it has not only passed the senate, but it has reformed the senate."

It was then that we took the responsibility as Liberals of making old age pensions a federal responsibility. What was the attitude of the Conservative party on that occasion? It will be found in *Hansard* of February 15, 1927, as reported at page 331. The Hon. Mr. Guthrie was speaking. He said:

I am speaking at this moment in order to make our position absolutely clear upon this question. The position of the Conservative party in this house in regard to old age pensions as proposed in this measure is this. We prefer a federal scheme. We prefer a scheme which will apply equally to every corner of Canada. This bill is limited to those persons who are in destitution and who have reached the age of seventy years. Apply the proposal to the Dominion of Canada equally and let the dominion treasury bear the expense.

That was the attitude of the Conservative party, and that attitude, I must state, was followed out later on by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King). On April 18, 1928,

[Mr. McGeer.]

the Prime Minister at a banquet of the National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada in Ottawa said:

Following the sequence which I adopted in referring to British legislation, let me now refer briefly to social legislation in Canada. The establishment of a federal Department of Labour, with the subsequent enactment of anti-sweating legislation, the prevention of industrial disputes by conciliation and investigation, the establishment of a system of government annuities, the provision made for the gradual extension throughout the dominion of a system of old age pensions, all these are examples in the realm of industry of the successful application of the principle of the future under Liberal administration which have served to bring to the working people of our land a wider measure of security against the hazards of industrial life. In the system of old age pensions inaugurated within the past year or two there is recognition, if such there ever was, of a community obligation to those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. Old age pensions are a part of the new Liberalism which seeks to secure the individual, in his advancing years, against the hazards of industrial life which takes from the masses of the people much of their energy and strength and leave them too often when the days of earning power are diminishing, with little in the way of security or protection in old age.

That was not the only time we declared old age pensions to be a Liberal policy and a federal Liberal responsibility. Speaking in the House of Commons on June 2, 1931, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 2260, the present Prime Minister made this statement:

The Liberal administration fought for many years for an old age pension act, and care I think was taken to make it clear that an amendment to the British North America Act would be required before this federal government would have power to administer an old age pension scheme. It was recognized that an amendment to the British North America Act would take some time, and for that reason the government of the day adopted the method of agreeing to give these grants in aid to the provinces on condition that they would carry out a scheme framed by the federal government which would be similar in all the provinces.

An hon. Member: A vicious principle.

Mr. Mackenzie King: The principle, from a financial point of view, was unsound. I am quite prepared to concede that. But I will go a step further and say that, in my opinion, this parliament ought to remedy the unsoundness of the principle, not by discontinuing to vote money for old age pensions, but by assuming the entire obligation, one hundred per cent. This government should take over the whole scheme and itself pay out the money. That is the position that should be taken; that is the proper way to remedy what there is of unsoundness in the principle.

A little later on, on July 20, 1931, as recorded at page 3947 of *Hansard*, the present Prime Minister made this statement:

Should a contributory system be under discussion there may be differences of view with regard to it, and the government may be faced