

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

the years for the best we can possibly do for old age security but right now my concern is that none of us do anything to jeopardize the chances of the Canadian people getting as soon as possible—and I hope it is only months away at the outside—the advantages of such progress as is contained in the recommendations that the committee has made to the house.

**Mr. Shaw:** Mr. Chairman, personally I consider it rather unfortunate that the subject of old age pensions should have been opened for discussion at this time. I had hopes that, with the results of the committee's deliberations presently in the hands of members of parliament, with the dominion-provincial conference in the offing and with another session coming up next year, hon. members would have been satisfied to permit the matter to rest for the time being. I recognize and appreciate, however, the right of any hon. member to discuss the subject at this time. I regret that my participation has become necessary because of what has already been said.

I was rather surprised that the leader of the opposition commenced his observations by asserting that he had no intention of dealing with the report of the committee and then set about to do just that. He did not do so in detail but he made it abundantly clear where he stands with respect to it, and thus, I contend, opened the matter for general discussion. Let me assure the committee, Mr. Chairman, that, having regard to the stage of the session we have reached at the present time and my personal reluctance to speak at this time, I shall be extremely brief.

The committee on old age security was welcomed by the Social Credit members. We realized, as all hon. members realize, that there was room for improvement in the existing old age pension scheme in Canada. We recognized that there were certain anomalies that should be removed. We recognized the fact that there were probably certain age groups within the country that should be given further consideration at this time. We have expressed ourselves from time to time with respect to the means test. We are on record on innumerable occasions. We have heard much about the schemes in other countries, and the virtues or presumed virtues of many of them have been extolled upon many occasions. I and those associated with me were extremely anxious to learn just what certain other countries have that we might find it desirable to accept.

The resolution setting up the committee offered the suggestion at least that the government has in mind the desirability of coming to grips with the subject of old age security,

[Mr. Knowles.]

giving consideration to it, and possibly providing justice for the pioneer citizens of Canada. May I say in passing that I have served on many committees of the House of Commons during the past ten years and I never enjoyed committee work as much as I did the committee work on old age security. I was deeply and profoundly impressed by the attitude of every member serving on that committee. I think it was a highly successful committee, and I think its success was due in no small part to the skill, impartiality and hard work of the co-chairman representing the House of Commons. I should also like to say that its success was attributable to the excellent assistance given to us by Dr. Davidson, Mr. Willard and Mr. Sharp. We do not forget for one moment of course those who worked behind the scenes, probably both day and night, in order that we might complete our deliberations during the present session.

As a matter of fact, when the resolution came before the house I said to myself that here was a committee that would sit for two years. I was firmly convinced in my own mind that it would take us two years to do the work. I am happy to express the view that I believe we did two years' work in a matter of two and a half months. Down through the years, as I said before, we have stated that we are desirous of seeing the age for eligibility lowered so far as Canada's pioneer citizens are concerned. We have expressed the opinion from time to time that, having regard to all the circumstances, the amount of the pension was not sufficient to assure at least a minimum basic standard of living. We have also, as I said a moment ago, expressed our views as to the means test. We have also done something else to which I must make reference in passing. From time to time we have expressed opposition to certain economic and financial policies of the government which we felt imposed restrictions that made it impossible for them to go as far as they could safely go if they were a Social Credit government. We feel that these economic and financial policies have imposed certain restrictions which need not necessarily be imposed. We have asserted from time to time that if the economy of the country were changed in the way that we have suggested it should be, probably we would experience no difficulty in going as far as I might desire to go in the field of old age security.

Nevertheless I hope that I can be considered as being realistic, and as a realist I see certain limitations. Therefore I am prepared to conclude that I must accept something less than I think would be possible and desirable if these limitations did not exist. We have always felt, for example, that under the type