

*Supply—Health and Welfare*

Once again I urge the minister and the government to consider the needs of our people and in the light of the increased resources of this country do something at an early date to raise these pensions.

I suggest to the minister that it is not the part of wisdom for him to criticize and speak against those of us who urge an increase in the old age pension, because if he stays in his present position I am sure, as he is, that it will not be much longer until even he and even the government of which he is a member will have to do something about this important problem. There are rumours about a certain event in the political life of Canada which may take place on October 29 of this year or June 17 of next year or somewhere in between.

**Mr. Martin:** Do you want me to tell you when?

**Mr. Knowles:** I do not suppose that the Minister of National Health and Welfare really knows, any more than I do, the precise date for the election. These are the suggested dates: October 29, 1956, June 17, 1957, or some date in between, say in April or May of next year.

**Mr. Martin:** We are bound to have an election within the next two years.

**Mr. Knowles:** And the chances are that it will be on Monday, since that is what is provided under the Canada Elections Act. I suggest that with a surplus developing in the federal treasury, with an increased gross national product, which means that at the present tax rate still more money will come in, and in view of the fact that with the easing of world tensions there is likely to be quite a substantial reduction in the national defence budget next year, there is quite a possibility that the Minister of National Health and Welfare will make headway with his colleague the Minister of Finance and get out of him money not only for health insurance but for an increase in the old age pension.

I suggest, therefore, that instead of criticizing those of us who advocate that an increase be made, he should take these appeals to heart and realize, as I am sure he must, that this government does not dare face the people of this country without doing something about this issue on which there is growing feeling. I urge with the least possible delay an increase in the old age pension.

**Mr. Martin:** My hon. friend and many others have spoken on this subject all through my estimates, and this is the first chance I have to make a reply which I think should be made from this side. My hon. friend referred to the Minister of Finance. He need not

seek to select one member of the government as against any other, because the fact is that every member of this government is as interested in these problems as any other member of this house, and the Minister of Finance is certainly as interested as is the hon. member.

**Mr. Knowles:** That is good.

**Mr. Martin:** With regard to old age security, we on this side of the house need not apologize for what we have done and are doing for the aged citizens of this country. We are now spending more for old age security than any other country in the world on a comparative basis. We are the only country that has a non-means test system. The other day the hon. member for Broadview mentioned the United States system, and I am sure the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would agree with me that he would not want to compare the project that came out of the old age security committee a few years ago with the kind of suggestion which was made by the hon. member for Broadview, when in fact the committee recommended against the particular suggestion the latter made.

**Mr. Knowles:** In principle the minister's statement is correct, but not with respect to the amounts that are paid.

**Mr. Martin:** It should not be forgotten that this year alone we have increased our total commitments to the aged by some \$11 to \$12 million. Ninety-five per cent of the moneys that are paid for old age security and old age assistance in this country comes from the taxpayers of Canada, under policies proposed by this government in this house. That is the fact. I think the hon. member for Prince Albert pointed out this morning the desirability of making sure that we should recognize that the provinces have their responsibility in this particular as well as the federal government, and I think that is true. I recognize the validity of what my hon. friend said about trying to maintain the non-means test character; but at the same time, whilst we are giving consideration to these problems—I wish to say that the government's policy will be announced when the government is in a position to do so—I may say that nevertheless we should not overlook the fact that the federal government is not in any way dragging its feet in the provision it is making for the aged citizens of this country.

In Newfoundland the federal government provides \$7,599,405; in Prince Edward Island, \$3,313,000; Nova Scotia, \$18,411,000; New Brunswick, \$13,246,000; Quebec, \$77,110,000; Ontario, \$134,644,000; Manitoba, \$21,953,000; Saskatchewan, \$22,331,000; British Columbia,