

Newfoundland

what would have been the position of these men had they lived until the time that Newfoundland had joined Canada.

Mr. St. Laurent: My understanding of the legislation is that as soon as they became Canadians they would not have to wait until the government of Newfoundland had passed a pension act. They would have twenty years of Canadian residence and could receive from the government of the province where they were then residing the pension provided by the laws of that province.

Mr. Drew: In view of the fact that there have been put on the record some statements which were doubtless a matter of interest not only to hon. members but also to people in Newfoundland who are interested in this subject, I think it would be well if I clarified one point in regard to the proposals in respect of old age pensions which were put forward by the dominion government in 1945 and in an amended form in the spring of 1946. I might say on behalf of the province which I then represented that I had put forward proposals in regard to old age pensions without a means test. But I would remind hon. members that the proposals put forward by the dominion government in regard to old age pensions were part of a combined set of proposals which were described by the then Prime Minister as an integrated whole, and that it was necessary so to regard them. These were to be paid—not only old age pensions but other provisions—with the understanding that special taxes were to be imposed to take care of these payments. Two of the special taxes which were included in the proposals of the dominion government should not be forgotten. One was a special income tax estimated at 5 per cent of all incomes without exemption over and above any other taxes now paid. The other was a poll tax estimated at that time in the case of Ontario at \$12 a head on every man, woman and child of sixteen and over, whether employed or not.

I would ask hon. members to recall these two special taxes as part of the dominion proposals when they are informed that there were certain suggestions as to certain benefits to be received.

Mr. Knowles: It does not fall on me to defend the dominion proposals to the provinces back in 1945. I just wish to make this comment on behalf of the government, if I may, but I am really speaking on behalf of the people of Canada who suffered a great loss because that conference broke up in 1945. I just wish to say on behalf of the government that the \$30 a month old age pension to all Canadians of seventy and over without a means test was not the only one

of the things offered as against any additional taxes that were to be collected to pay for them.

As I have already intimated in what I said, I asked my question a moment ago for two reasons. Perhaps one of them has already been met but the other one has not. The one thing I was anxious to draw attention to was what Canadians in nine provinces have lost and what Canadians in the ten provinces will lose because of the impossibility of the dominion and all the provinces getting together. The other hope that I had in raising the matter was that the Prime Minister would indicate, as his predecessor did a number of times, and as the Minister of National Health and Welfare did all during the debate on old age pensions two years ago, that that basic idea of a minimum pension of \$30 a month at age seventy to all Canadians without a means test was still part of the government's aim and policy. The Minister of National Health and Welfare told us so a good many times when he referred to these proposals, and he said that still constituted the basic plan. I am disappointed tonight that the Prime Minister did not take the opportunity to say that so far as the government which he heads is concerned that is still the aim.

Everyone in this house, and everyone in the country knows where the C.C.F. stands—knows of our interest, our concern and our definite pledge to the people of Canada. It is that there will be security for our old people in the form of old age pensions payable to all at a respectable age without the means test. But tonight I am asking—and I hope now that I am affording him the opportunity to give it to us in terms a little more clear-cut he will do so—that the Prime Minister state the position of his party on this important question.

Mr. St. Laurent: The position of this party on this question has always been well known to the country. It has involved a pension of \$30 a month without a means test but on a contributory basis. In order to have a contributory basis it is necessary that there be an understanding with all the provinces to enable the raising of the contribution by a compulsory contribution in the form of taxes earmarked for that special purpose. That requires an understanding with all the provinces, because, under the taxing powers that the federal government has under section 91 of the British North America Act, it cannot impose taxes for these social services as such.

Mr. Graydon: I have been interested in the discussion which has taken place with respect to the time when old age pensions will