

Old Age Security Act Amendment

when the head of the family retires. I call the attention of the minister to this fact. I was hoping that the minister would include in his amendment, a clause providing that both husband and wife would receive their old age pension simultaneously, which would have been much more logical.

There are also other points to which I should like to draw the minister's attention before concluding, namely the Old Age Assistance Act, the Disabled Persons Act and the Blind Persons Act. We know that if the government has agreed to grant the increase we request for our older people, it is on account of the increase in the cost of living. Now, the cost of living has increased in the same degree for blind people, for disabled people and for those who will not yet be 68 this year.

Therefore, I think the minister and the government should meet with the provincial government authorities in order to amend those acts, namely the Blind Persons Act, the Disabled Persons Act and the Old Age Assistance Act, so that these needy people may receive the benefits provided by this legislation concerning old age security.

I wanted to address these few remarks to the minister tonight, so that he may consider them and introduce, if possible, the necessary amendments, in order that all the handicapped persons, and not only those belonging to a certain social class, may be entitled to the same benefits everywhere in Canada.

[English]

Hon. Hugh John Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, in making some observations concerning the motion before the house for second reading of Bill C-251, to amend the Old Age Security Act, I will remember the speech of the minister during our consideration of the resolution on which this legislation is based. At that time he made extended remarks which begin at page 10707 of *Hansard* for December 5 of this year.

• (8:00 p.m.)

In that speech the minister reminded the house of several things which I think are tremendously important. There are some things which we should remember because they are most important. In the course of his speech the minister told us that this legislation will affect 900,000 citizens of Canada. He also endeavoured to establish that, because of the reduction in the age of qualification for

benefit, by the year 1970 one and a half million Canadians will be involved in this legislation.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, could we have order in the house? I see that a Liberal caucus is being held on the other side of the chamber. One member is standing and talking to others while the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton is making his speech. I have not seen this happen in the house before. If hon. members opposite are not interested in what is being said, why do they not go behind the curtain?

Mr. Flemming: The minister said that in 1967 the cost under the present legislation would be \$260 million to \$280 million. He said that by 1970 the outlay in respect of the existing old age security pension would reach \$1,110 million and that when we add the supplement to which I have referred we will reach a total cost in 1967 of approximately \$1,400 million. The minister also stated that by 1970, which is not too far away, the total expenditure under the old age security program will reach \$2 billion, and of this amount the portion payable under this legislation will be approximately \$385 million.

It is not my intention to try for a moment to argue that this expenditure should not be undertaken by the parliament of Canada. I believe that all parties in this parliament have committed themselves to an expenditure of roughly this magnitude. While we may not oppose the principle of taxation of our businesses, resources and the people of this country who produce this staggering sum, I believe we would be very derelict in our duty if we did not examine the situation. We must examine the economic structure of this country to ascertain how in our own minds and to our satisfaction, in the light of all the circumstances, we can best raise the funds necessary to carry out this program. Two billion dollars by 1970 is a staggering sum of money.

As I said before, we are all committed to providing a universal old age pension of \$100 to \$105 a month. This is something to which all parties subscribe. Therefore there is no use in any of us trying to get out of this commitment. I have given the minister's figures as to the cost of the program. Where do we go from there? I think we can properly go into the details of how we are to raise this money. Whether the provision of the minimum income becomes universal or whether the amount depends upon the financial resources of the individual is something with which I think we are not all in accord. The minister