

Old Age Security

the cheques received by our old age security pensioners at the end of October. It is still our belief that this increase ought to be made retroactive at least to April of this year. I make that suggestion having in mind the fact that certain other increases that were provided in this chamber a short time ago were made retroactive to April, and indeed some other increases for civil servants and so on, were made retroactive to last October. I think the least we can do for our old age pensioners is to make this \$10 increase retroactive to April of this year. I hope that somewhere along the line, while this legislation is before us, the government will consider making this change in the proposal that has been presented.

We agree that if we are going to ask and receive an increase in old age pensions we have to face up to the matter of paying for it, but we are puzzled as to why the government has proposed an increase in personal income tax of a full percentage point and has not made any suggestion about increasing the corporation tax. We also wonder if consideration has not been given to raising the ceiling on the amount that is paid under the Income Tax Act so far as old age security is concerned. We feel the rate might well have been left at 3 per cent, that the \$90 ceiling could have been raised, and a percentage point added to the corporation tax. A method of that sort would be a fairer way of raising the money, rather than imposing a straight percentage point across the board on income tax.

We should have more details about this matter. Perhaps the Minister of National Health and Welfare will give us these details as we go along; but even so, I do not want undue time to be taken up because my concern is that this piece of legislation be put through so that the pensions can be adjusted and so that our old people can get this increase as soon as possible.

The main change which I think should be made in the legislation now before us relates to the effective date, and we in this party believe it ought to be made retroactive to April of this year.

I would also point out that it is recognized by all of us that this is just one step that is being taken with respect to improving the position of our old age pensioners, and we recognize that this step is being taken because the government was persuaded to change its mind during the so-called summer recess. That is the reason it was not on the order paper. The hon. member for Perth knows that, and he does not have to make such fuss because it was not on the order paper. On the night of August 2 the government had no intention of proceeding with this increase.

Motions for today's order paper had to be in that day; but the government changed its mind in the meantime and so it was not technically possible to have it on the order paper. Today, however, we gave unanimous consent to proceed with it, and having done so we should not complain about the resolution not being on the order paper.

The whole question of the eligible age for receiving old age pensions is one with which we must grapple and to which we must find an answer. We in this party feel that the pension, as of right, must be available at age 65. We would like to see the Old Age Security Act amended to provide that the pension payable under it be payable at age 65, but we are not going to hold up this measure for that purpose. In the meantime I would go so far as to say that we welcome the statement made by the minister to the effect that consideration will be given, when the Canada pension plan is brought before the house, enacting legislation making it possible for people to take their old age security pension at an earlier age on a reduced basis.

Instead of our talking about 70 being the normal age, it should be the other way around. The normal age for people getting a pension as of right should be 65, and if people want to continue working past that age they should have the right to do so. Also if they want to delay taking their pension they should be able to receive a greater amount at a later age.

One of the real gaps in our present set-up is this five year period between the ages of 65 and 70. Retirement generally seems to be around 65 years of age. This is normal in industry and many other kinds of employment; but here the pension is put off until 70. During that five year period our people are in the wilderness and do not have what Canadians generally feel should be theirs as of right. Therefore I hope the consideration of this matter, which was implied in what the minister said this afternoon, will be speeded up as quickly as possible.

This leads me to say that I hope there will be the least possible delay in bringing forward the Canada pension plan in whatever revised form it will now have to be presented to us. Since the \$10 increase in the old age security pension will no longer be an item in that plan, it seems to me this would involve a change in the computations, either a change in the amounts to be charged or a change in the amount of the pension. It will certainly call for a revision of that actuarial document which the minister provided a few days ago; and if one province is to stay out of the national plan, this too will call for certain changes in it. But, whatever changes are necessary, we urge the minister and the