

Mr. Speaker: Obviously, there is no agreement. If there is no agreement the Chair has to put the motion. I will inquire if there is agreement.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise) has indicated that there is no agreement. Therefore the question is—

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I tried to explain a few minutes ago that we were willing to have the House sit until 6.30. If at 6.30 the discussion is over, we could proceed with the vote. However, if at 6.30 o'clock, some members want to have the floor, I would not wish to prevent them from doing so. The debate could be resumed to-morrow because I feel the sun will rise again in the morning as usual.

[English]

Mr. Jerome: Mr. Speaker, it occurs to me that that objective can easily be achieved by passing the motion and stopping the debate at 6.30, which would accommodate everybody's point of view.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is obvious to the Chair that the only thing to do is to put the motion.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): You blew it, Jim.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Mr. Jerome, seconded by Mr. Watson, moves pursuant to Standing Order 6:

That the hours of sitting be extended beyond six o'clock this day until debate upon third reading of Bill C-207 is concluded.

Are any members objecting?

And more than ten members having risen:

Mr. Speaker: There being more than ten members objecting, the motion is deemed to have been withdrawn.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I suppose you have to learn the hard way, Jim.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat what I said before, and add that if the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Jerome) had not intervened I would have completed what I had to say by this time. However, we are still prepared to sit until 6.30.

We have in the past waived the notices which have been required. We have been co-operative. We have done all that an opposition could do with respect to expediting this bill, still retaining our right to debate intelligently and responsibly what we think are errors and defects in the legislation. If we did anything less than that we would not be discharging our duty to our constituents and to parliament. And having said that, Mr. Speaker, I repeat that this party is still prepared to sit until 6.30 with respect to this measure. I hope that the measure will pass, much as I dislike many aspects of it. And it probably will pass, either by 6.30 or certainly by some time early tomorrow afternoon. It will then go to the other place, and no doubt will become law.

Old Age Security Act

Let me say very hastily that there are three aspects of the bill which disturb me, despite the fact that it is going to pass and that we are not opposing its passage. In the first place, so far as the amounts are concerned, the government has shown itself to have all the characteristics of a shabby, mean, petty-fogging, Scrooge approach to the older people of this land. There is no question about it. Those are the facts. Having calculatedly brought about a measure of inflation in this country to which the older people were exposed as the first victims, and having resisted strongly all attempts from this side of the House—in a non-partisan manner I include members from all opposition parties—over the months and years to expand the spending power of the older people who are in need of increased pensions to make up for the difficulties which inflation has brought upon them, the government has persisted in its attitude. The government voted against our motions to amend existing statutes, motions which all parties on the opposition side launched through the medium of opposition days, and the traditional motions with respect to the Speech from the Throne and budget. Our proposals have not been accepted and everybody on the other side, from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) down, has voted against them. However, some improvement in the pension position of the elderly is being made and we propose to support it.

• (1750)

The second thing I dislike about the bill is the way it has been introduced. I repeat what I said about the attempts made by the opposition to improve the lot of these people and the rejection of those attempts by the government. Then suddenly, in what appears to be the dying days of Parliament, we are told "Take it or leave it; it has to be through by a certain day and we require from you all forms of acceptance in order that the bill may receive Royal Assent by this Friday". This is not a way to govern this country; this is not a way to pass legislation which is so badly required for the benefit of the old people of this land. I resent having to give my approval under these circumstances and against this background.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there has been a problem in relation to the constitutional issue, the federal-provincial aspect and the abrasive attitude of this government in its approach to the other provinces, in particular the province of Quebec. In this regard I should like to quote from an interview with the Prime Minister published today in the *Toronto Star*. The interviewer said:

I was wondering too, and I don't want to ask phoney questions about election dates and so on, but it has crossed my mind about the effect of calling an election if this Quebec problem continues over the months.

I say here, Mr. Speaker, that there had been some discussion, as there has been in the press and in the mind of the Prime Minister, about the attitude taken by ministers in the Quebec government on this bill and the lack of consultation on it. There had even been public threats of resignation by Quebec ministers. The question continues:

I wonder what would be the effect of an election with Quebec in this state of semi-turmoil?

This is the answer:

It's hard to say but my guess would be that it would rather serve the cause of federalism and hopefully of our government—