

*Old Age Security Act Amendment*

welfare, now the Secretary of State for External Affairs. All new members are impressed with that minister.

**An hon. Member:** It does not last long.

**Mr. Churchill:** That impression lasts for one day or two. I was impressed with his presentation on that occasion and I suggest to the present Minister of National Health and Welfare that he read again the speech made by the then minister on October 25, 1951. He, and others, might well read the subsequent speeches made by members of the other parties in the house. That House of Commons consisted of 190 members on the government side, far too many, and on the opposition side of a rather small but able group of Progressive Conservatives, a small but able group of the C.C.F. and a small but able group of Social Credit members, chiefly from Alberta. The men of that day were able—

**Mr. Knowles:** They are more able now.

**Mr. Churchill:** I would not say you are more able. I was impressed by the C.C.F. in 1951, much more so than by the N.D.P. The total group on the opposition side was a very able group, and there was a much more able government than now to the right of the Speaker. I can well remember the men occupying the treasury benches of that period. The parliament of that day, exclusive of the new members I mentioned a few minutes ago consisted of men of great experience and considerable ability. One has only to call to mind 10, 20 or 30 of those men to realize that what I say is true. It was those men who concluded that our old age pensions should be handled on a different basis, that the means test should be abolished and pensions be given as of right.

What are we doing in 1966 in attempting to reverse that decision? That decision was not arrived at hastily, sir. It was arrived after years of discussion, after an excellent piece of work by a joint committee, and after careful consideration by men who were equal in mental stature to any of us here. Those men reached their conclusion and spoke in favour of abolishing the means test. What are the lesser men of this period doing in attempting to reverse that decision without sound reasons for so doing? By what process of thought can the treasury benches come out with the present proposal, a retrograde step unjustified under present circumstances.

We have come a long way since 1951 in the field of social security. There is greater emphasis now on social consciousness in this

country. People realize that the real values to a country, in addition to its natural resources, are the values of human beings making up its citizenry. We have come a long way in the fields of health, research and education. We have done a good many things to improve the lot of the citizens of this country. Having moved a long way in the field of social security, a concept that I commend, why do we now embark on a retrograde step? We are wealthier now than we were in 1951. We have a larger population and we are equal to any additional financial burden. Yet in 1966 we face the problem we faced in 1951, the rising cost of living and inadequate incomes to meet that rising cost.

In the 1951 debate you will find that most of the time was spent in recommending an increase in the old age pension. The idea of abolishing the means test was universally accepted and the debate centered on raising the ceiling, then \$40, to meet the rising cost of living. I started off by drawing attention to the statement made by the then minister of national health and welfare and I think it is well worth recording again what he said then. I refer to page 383 of *Hansard* for October 25, 1951. The minister had been talking about methods of paying old age insurance in other countries and he was talking about the actuarial principles some of them used. I read:

Such systems fall far short of universal coverage to which we attach the highest importance and on which the parliamentary committee placed the greatest emphasis; while suited to the needs of the industrial wage earner, they exclude inevitably large sections of the population, particularly the farmers and other groups of self-employed. Even for the industrial wage earner, such systems take many years to mature and benefits in the first ten years or more are nominal in amount. The result is that side by side with such schemes a large continuing program of means test pensions is and must be maintained for many years to cover the needs of those who cannot be brought under the scheme, and to supplement the benefits of those who do come under it.

I point out the minister was referring to schemes in other countries. He goes on to say this:

Let me repeat. Where such a system operates, two programs exist indefinitely side by side:

(a) a system of insurance benefits, paid as of right only, to those who have made the required contributions; and

(b) a system of old age assistance, based on a "means test" for those who cannot so qualify.

This is what the government of that day, supported by all members of the house was preparing to eliminate. The then minister was drawing to our attention systems that were in