

*Old Age Security Act*

correctly, Mr. Speaker, the House was not sitting and he had ample time to go to committee.

We are considering a bill which requires quick passage if we want our senior citizens to benefit from it. Now, what are we going to do in committee? We are no doubt going to hear for the hundredth time the series of Créditistes proposals and amendments.

The New Democratic Party proposed \$150 as the amount of the basic pension. Now, the Social Credit Party of Canada talks about \$200. I am sure that in committee, they will talk about \$250. Some talked about reducing the pension eligibility age to 60. Some also thought of something else. Yesterday, amendments were moved, according to which the pension would be paid to any 50-year old handicapped person. What is special about being 50 years old? Why not look after the 49, 48 or 45-year old handicapped persons? Why grant a pension at 60? Why not at 55 or as I said myself in the committee, at 43 or at 42? It could be optional. And all that without any computation of the costs. Of course, with the Créditistes, there is never any problem as to costs. They just set off the press and there is no problem: the money will go out.

That is of course a completely irresponsible attitude concerning that question, a completely demagogic attitude, that has nothing to do with the real problems of poverty in Canada at the present time.

If this bill is sent back to the committee, what is going to be done to it? They will merely try to reintroduce in committee the amendments that were ruled out of order. And the only result will be a general loss of time for the House and for the committee, and it seems to me that the hon. Créditistes members have already wasted enough the time of the house during yesterday's debate.

Mr. Speaker, I say once more that this amendment is absolutely futile.

[English]

The only thing this amendment can do is delay adoption of the bill. The government has declared its intention and there is a recommendation by the governor in council on this measure: it has been before the House and we have clearly stated our position. The House has pronounced itself on first reading, on second reading and in committee. As I said before the committee, the questions raised by members, of reducing the age for receipt of the pension or increasing the amount, deserve discussion.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lalonde:** Members can applaud as much as they want to. I hope we will have a more responsible discussion than the speeches they have been delivering for the last two days in this House. I hope these hon. members will be in the committee where they can discuss this question. I hope the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) will take the trouble of coming to the committee.

We have an agreement in the committee to consider this whole question but, once more, it has to be looked at in the context of poverty in Canada. We have not only the problem of people aged 60 and 65 in this country, or of the handicapped above 50 as the Créditistes were talking about; we have the problem of all handicapped from birth to death. We have the problem of the single-parent family,

[Mr. Lalonde.]

the problem of the handicapped and the blind, the problem of the people who are on welfare in this country. All these people also need to be looked after. It is not a question of just the piecemeal approach that the Créditistes are putting before this House.

I heard an unbelievable statement this afternoon by the hon. member for Drummond (Mr. Boisvert) who said, "Maybe it will be a year before we can give what we want to give to the old people." Mr. Speaker, they are ready to say, "Forget about this" and not face our senior citizens' needs now. Then we will have a year in which the Créditistes will have time to make more propaganda across the country and not achieve anything because, as the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) said yesterday, they have "ni la balance ni le pouvoir".

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Does the hon. member for Drummond (Mr. Boisvert) rise on a point of order?

**Mr. Boisvert:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I feel my words are being deliberately misinterpreted. I said that even if we had to wait for a year to win our argument, we would do so but we do not want to delay passage of this bill.

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde).

**Mr. Bell:** Let's get on, and find out how the NDP is going to vote.

**Mr. Lalonde:** On this whole matter the government has announced firm measures. I said I would appear before the committee, as this amendment proposes. We do not need an amendment for that: I will appear before the committee; there is an agreement to that effect. We are going to review the problems that would be raised with the lowering of the pensionable age and the increase in pensions.

**An hon. Member:** When?

**Mr. Lalonde:** Any time. I am in the hands of the committee in this respect. When the estimates are under consideration, we will consider the matter. This question has been discussed with my provincial colleagues and they have expressed reservations about changing the structure of the old age security program at the present time. They want a general review and want to discuss the whole problem of welfare.

• (1640)

One hon. member who said that British Columbia was paying \$200 to senior citizens suggested that we might give this amount to everybody, everywhere. There is nothing to prevent the provinces increasing old age pensions if they want to do so. They are welcome to do so if they feel they have the funds.

Is the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose) rising to ask me a question?