

• (4:00 p.m.)

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT AMENDMENT

PROVISION OF GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT AND DETERMINATION OF PENSIONERS' INCOMES

The house resumed from Monday, December 12, consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen for the second reading of Bill No. C-251, to amend the Old Age Security Act.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I raised a number of points yesterday about the legislation before us.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if the hon. member might wait for a moment before beginning to give hon. members who have things to do an opportunity to get organized.

Mr. Knowles: You are so polite.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, last night we were discussing some of the problems affecting old age pensioners, and some of the shortcomings of the legislation before us as it related to them. I do not wish to continue in this vein too long, but I want to read a letter from a constituent of mine who has lived in the north country all his life. He has made his contribution to northern Ontario and represents a group of people who have pioneered in this country. The value of their contribution is well known. This man now lives at Teck Pioneer Residence, an old people's home in Kirkland Lake. His letter was addressed to the editor of the *Northern Daily News*. This is what he says:

Dear Sir:

I read, with no little interest, the column of your Ottawa correspondent, Patrick Nicholson dated Wednesday, November 3rd, 1966. In it he grows eloquent . . . he always is . . . about the brilliance of Hon. Allan MacEachen who will, he says, earn gratitude from our old age pensioners who will receive thirty dollars a month additional if they can show that they have no other income; and glory from the taxpayers who will be relieved to know that the amount can be given without an increase in taxes. He estimates that 45 per cent of the 1,200,000 pensioners have no other income and it is to this element he proposes to give \$30 a month extra. But to get it they have to send in to the Federal Office a statement to the effect that they have no other income. Others who have annuities up to \$29 will, if they want the extra dollar or so send also a statement of their income. This is called a negative income tax form. This is no "means test" says this brilliant man and his backers. Well, let me say that if the vast majority of old age pensioners are not as brilliant minded as the Hon. Mr. MacEachen, they know in their heart it is a reversion to the "means test"; and I think they will remember it when polling day comes around. How they glibly talk, these brilliant men, about the \$450,000,000 it is going to cost. Do they talk about the millions upon millions that these pensioners produced during their hey day?

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To hundreds of thousands of the lowly pensioners, it looks as if the brilliance of the Hon. Mr. MacEachen has been to preserve the profits of our huge Corporations at the expense of the poor pensioners. It is not my purpose to introduce a lot of figures from government charts. The same Patrick Nicholson has shown us on more than one occasion where millions have been wasted. Not long ago I read where General Motors showed an unprecedented two billion dollars and this year they raised prices again, and it just seems like yesterday since I read about Massey Ferguson making 112 per cent profit and they too raised prices. Only the other day when the Finance Committee was in session at Ottawa, Andrew Brewin of the N.D.P. spotted what he thought something strange in a \$350,000 item. After strenuous inquiries he was told that the item had been tax deductible, and when he asked for what he was told, it was a fund solicited by political parties. I hope we hear more about that! Many like myself must have heard the statement made on T.V. the other night, that we, yes, we poor pensioners, along with the rest of you, loaned some South American country \$200,000,000 without interest and payable 50 years hence. Sounds like Alice in Wonderland when you hear all these things, and then you see these brilliant men standing up, down in Ottawa with owl-like faces deploring the fact that we can't increase the pension to all, so that it might coincide somewhat nearer to the rising cost of living.

And latterly, it is a safe bet to say, 60 per cent of all that pension money paid to all pensioners will be spent immediately in the locality of the recipients and, as Mr. Nicholson has pointed out, it is not just peanuts,—a dollar bill spent in several transactions can keep a person busy a good part of the day. This is a very important thing for all politicians to remember when they are soliciting votes from their ain folk. The pension system is here for good. We recognize it as a right not a hand out, and the wise administrator will always see that it is adjusted to the normal standard of living. In the meantime we must get this cursed "means test" removed from the Statute Books at the earliest possible moment. I don't think I am alone in making this protest. Even if I was, it would still be a letter from

Hugh G. Kinniburgh.

I believe this is the type of letter which is being written by old age pensioners across Canada to most members of parliament. In my opinion, Mr. Kinniburgh, a man well over the age of 80 who still retains all his faculties, does an exceptional amount of reading and is well known throughout northern Ontario to which he has made a great contribution, has correctly stated the issue.

The pension system is here to stay. It will be expanded. It will become part of our every day life to an ever increasing extent. Moreover, a good administrator would see that pensions were closely related to living standards and set in accordance with those standards.

Like members of the Social Credit party, I will support this measure. But, unlike them, I will support it only because I think it does