

assured by the Minister that I would get that information. Given that the debate of clause-by-clause study of Bill C-133 starts in ten minutes, when are we going to have that information?

● (1520)

Mr. Smith: Madam Speaker, I assured the Hon. Member that I would make inquiries on his behalf, and I did that. At such time as I receive the answer from the Minister, I will of course deliver it to the House.

Mr. Murphy: We were promised by the Minister in committee that we would have that information. The committee meets in ten minutes. Will the Parliamentary Secretary assure us that the Minister will keep his word and provide that information to us before we have to vote on the Bill?

Mr. Smith: I would be delighted to convey the concerns of the Hon. Member to the Minister.

Mr. Neil: Madam Speaker, in connection with question No. 4,101 which has been on the Order Paper since March 2, it is a very simple question to the Department of Agriculture requesting information as to the names, the courses and so on of individuals who have been given extended leaves of absence to further their education. I cannot understand why it has taken so long for the Department to answer.

Mr. Smith: Madam Speaker, I would be delighted to look into the matter on behalf of the Hon. Member.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT (NO. 2)

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-131, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (No. 2), as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

Mr. Vince Dantzer (Okanagan North) moved:

That Bill C-131, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (No. 2), be amended by adding immediately after line 27, at page 5, the following new Clause:

"3. The special (1983 & 1984) supplements to GIS shall be included in the OAS benefits in 1985 and thereafter OAS shall be fully indexed."

He said: Madam Speaker, this is the third time I have had the opportunity, if one cares to call it an opportunity, to speak on Bill C-131. On the first occasion I indicated to the House that I was not very happy with the prospect of speaking to what I consider to be a very rotten Bill. It is a very unpleasant task to have to waste the time of the House speaking to a Bill which should never have come before it.

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

Before dealing with my proposed amendment, I would like it clearly understood by Hon. Members that having brought forward this amendment in no way indicates that my Party or I will support the Bill when it eventually comes to a vote. We are certainly not in favour of Bill C-131. No amendment whatsoever, could improve the terrible burden it places upon the elderly. This amendment can only perhaps relieve the burden after a period of two years.

The Bill as it now stands before the House mentions nothing about what will happen in 1985. In order that the House understand the intent of my amendment, I should like to read it again. I really propose to add a Clause 3 to the end of the Bill which is really a wrap-up Clause that defines what should happen at the end of 1984 when supposedly full indexing will be brought back. My proposed Clause reads as follows:

The special (1983 & 1984) supplements to GIS shall be included in the OAS benefits in 1985 and thereafter OAS shall be fully indexed.

Under its six and five program and under Bill C-131, the Government proposes to reduce the indexing to a maximum of 6 per cent in 1983. Presumably the inflationary index will be considerably higher than that. At this moment it is just below 10 per cent. If it stays there, presumably old age pensioners will lose purchasing power to the extent of 4 per cent. The Government is saying that it does not want people under the poverty line to lose any purchasing power, so it is adding that 4 per cent to the GIS for the two-year term of the Bill.

The result of that will be to decrease the importance of OAS. At the end of two years, if inflation continues at its present rate, we will find that the importance of the GIS program will be much more than it is now and, correspondingly, the importance of the OAS program will be reduced and indexing will continue in 1985 based upon a reduced OAS and an increased GIS. Therefore, all people just above the poverty line will continue to be indexed on a reduced OAS. It will have a long-term, tremendous effect not only upon elderly people but upon everyone in the country, because ultimately they will receive that much less.

At one time the OAS was a very basic part of our retirement program. Canada was proud to have such a program which was universal in its application. Every person could look forward to receiving that pension when they reached age 65 whether or not they had other pension plans. In 1964, OAS accounted for about 20 per cent of the average wage and salary in the country, but its importance has been downplayed. It has not kept up with inflation or with general salary levels. The rate is now below 14 per cent. Therefore, we can see that that basic program has been decreased in importance. This horrendous Bill C-131, sponsored by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), will further reduce the importance of that program.

By my amendment I am really trying to stop this from happening. My amendment cannot possibly completely solve the damage the Bill will do, but to some extent it will help overcome the damage. I do not see how any Government Member can fail to vote for the amendment because it does exactly what they have been saying. On several occasions Hon.