

Old Age Security Act Amendment

with the maintenance of morale and things of that sort.

For these reasons I believe the government might well look at the cost of NATO to our country when it is seeking \$100 million to carry on the old age security program. Again, the money might also be obtained by making an adjustment in corporation taxes and in the taxes imposed on the higher income groups. I refer to the tax deducted for payment into the old age security fund. Has the minister considered this possibility?

While I am speaking about the cost of old age security I want to mention that the committee on veterans affairs went to Europe last July and while in France met with officials of the pensions branch of the French government to discuss military pensions and pensions in general. The committee did the same thing in London where its members met with officials of the British ministry of pensions to discuss disability pensions, old age pensions and so on. We were informed in both capitals that in order to remove the issue of pensions from partisan politics it was the policy to review pensions periodically in relation to the cost of living, to the level of wages generally and to standards of productivity. In my opinion the government should give consideration to doing the same with respect to old age security benefits, disability pensions and other pensions paid to veterans, as well as disability allowances, pensions to the blind and so on.

The hon. member for Simcoe East said we might well do without the new defence building on which so much is being spent. That project could be postponed. We seem to be getting along fairly well in the present headquarters. This would mean a saving of \$50 million. My hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre does not like the tower because it will be higher than the peace tower on the parliament buildings. I think there are sound grounds for his objection. It is a symbolism we do not like so far as our national policies are concerned.

We shall certainly support the bill, knowing of the urgent need of those to whom it applies. At the same time we emphasize our opposition to the breach of the principle upon which the Old Age Security Act was founded, that is to say, universality. We are very sorry to see a departure from that principle. It is all the more saddening when one recalls that it was only obtained after a great deal of effort in the house on the part of members of the opposition who were finally successful in convincing the government of the desirability of

[Mr. Herridge.]

the principle of universality. It is for these reasons that we feel the government could have given more consideration to the opportunities open to it to save \$100 million this year and to save \$200 million by 1970 so that all persons would continue to receive old age security at the rate of \$105 a month on what we consider to be a sound financial basis.

● (10:00 p.m.)

Mr. J. E. Pascoe (Moose Jaw-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure whether there is an agreement that we will continue sitting or whether I should call it ten o'clock. Is there agreement that we carry on?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret): Order. There has been agreement that we carry on until eleven o'clock.

Mr. Pascoe: Then I should like to say a few words in this debate. Under the new rules of the house the debate on the resolution stage is limited to one day. Therefore not too many speakers had an opportunity to join in the debate. I think it is the duty of all members who are interested in the welfare of our senior citizens to take part in this debate before the legislation is given second reading.

Mr. Byrne: There are 265 members.

Mr. Pascoe: It would show that they have an interest in the welfare of the senior citizens. I would hope that the hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Byrne) would get up once in a while to speak rather than sit there and make interjections. We will wait for him.

I do not think I need repeat the arguments which have been advanced by some members on this side with regard to the penalty on those who have the incentive to carry on and earn some income after they retire. This has been brought out previously. There is also the point about the possible removal of the incentive for thrift. Of course there is the point that all our old age security pensioners require additional financial help because of the ever-increasing high cost of living. As I say I do not wish to repeat these arguments.

I will deal separately with one great difficulty which we on this side see in the bill, that is, the income test which we regard as a thinly disguised means test or needs test. The minister has employed every argument he could in an attempt to justify his claim that his plan for senior citizens does not involve a means test or a needs test. Incidentally, as has been stated by others, the proposed income check, if this legislation goes through without