

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

We somewhat hurriedly put people in to move it, and our attempt to move it was abortive. I am of the opinion we should not attempt to move that type of building in which the mortar is over 125 years of age, because it crumbled as soon as we moved it. I want to tell the hon. member that the idea for the preservation of Galt house originated with our Historic Sites and Monuments Board. They recommended that we do this, and we undertook it. It was unfortunate that we failed. I am going to refer this matter again to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, and leave it to them to suggest how we can commemorate Galt's name and that particular era which, historically, is so important to us.

I do want to thank the Historical Society of Sherbrooke and the city of Sherbrooke for their co-operation in this venture. I hope when we get a recommendation from the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, which is a very valuable body to my department and to the government of Canada, that we will be able to carry out that recommendation, and that we will do justice to the thing we attempted when we lost the house.

OLD AGE SECURITY—CONTINUATION OF PAYMENTS TO DEPENDANTS OF DECEASED PENSIONER

Mr. Barry Mather (New Westminster): Last Friday, Mr. Speaker, on orders of the day I sought to direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I should like to quote the question I raised at that time, as recorded at page 8661 of *Hansard*:

Can he say what consideration is being given to the request of the pensioners and senior citizens federation of Canada that the old age pension of a deceased pensioner be continued for six months in order that the surviving spouse be enabled to meet debts incurred by terminal illness?

At that time the suggestion was made that this question should be more properly put on the order paper, and this suggestion resulted in the question being raised on the late show. We have, I think, hundreds of these cases across Canada in which old age pensioners are suffering as a result of the last illness of one or other members of their families. I do not think there is any need for me to stress that fact; I am sure every member of the house is aware of many cases of this. We have all had contact with elderly couples suffering in one way or another from the physical, emotional and financial pressures which are bound up in the final illness of one or other of them.

[Mr. Laing.]

• (10:10 p.m.)

The proposal which was raised by the senior citizens and pensioners organization seems now to be a very pertinent one, particularly at this time, Mr. Speaker, when the government has indicated that there is to be no real, basic increase in the old age security pension, and at the same time has indicated that there is to be a delay in the implementation of health insurance which might have helped these people at least one year earlier.

My question is this: Is the government sufficiently impressed with the practical need for action in this sphere by continuing the old age pension of one deceased pensioner to his or her surviving partner? To help the government give consideration to this matter, Mr. Speaker, I think I should point out that the statistics I have indicate that, in respect to people in the age group 64-69, if this proposal were taken up and implemented and the pension continued to the surviving spouse after the death of the other, the cost would be approximately \$6 million a year to the country—and this at a time when my figures also indicate that the taxpayers are paying approximately \$4 million a day by way of defence costs. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the government whether they will consider this request which has been made by the national organization of pensioners.

Mrs. Margaret Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the house will sympathize with the motives behind the hon. member's proposal, but I would point out that some provision has already been made by this parliament in this area. Also of course there are a number of difficulties involved in a general program of the nature outlined by the hon. member.

The first is the question of cost. There are approximately 1.2 million pensioners in Canada now receiving payments of \$75 a month. This amounts to \$1,080 million a year in federal expenditures.

In addition, the government will shortly be introducing a program to provide a guaranteed income supplement to old age security recipients. It is estimated this program will cost more than \$225 million per annum.

An additional program to provide the estate of a deceased pensioner with a further six months benefit—at \$75 per month—would cost at least \$38 million a year. This is based on the current death rate of 85,000 per year in this age group.