

Old Age Security Act Amendment

Croll committee report. As has been mentioned by members of the opposition, particularly members of the New Democratic Party, the Croll committee has criticized measures providing further assistance to older people with an income not exceeding \$75 a month based on a means test or a needs test.

However, these hon. members have conveniently neglected to inform the house that the alternative to this suggested by the Croll committee is an income guarantee program based on the income test, the very measure proposed by the government.

Let us take a quick look at some of the principal recommendations of the Croll committee as they appear on page 18, of the report. Paragraph 3 reads:

(3) The establishment of an income guarantee program to provide allowances throughout life to all persons beginning at age 65 on the following lines:

(a) that the only conditions for eligibility under the income guarantee program be age, as indicated above, ten years' residence in Canada, and net cash income from all sources, including old age security and the Canada Pension Plan, below the above amounts.

(b) that the program be administered and financed by the federal government.

(c) that the procedure call for the completion of a simplified income form annually and that the amount by which the declared income falls short of the established minima in any year constitute the benefit for the year following.—

I suggest that this should sound rather familiar to members of the house because it is very similar to the proposals of the government.

I suggest that if those who criticized these proposals have based their criticism on what the Croll report had to say about the means and needs test then in all honesty and fairness, they must accept what the committee said, when it urged an income guarantee program based on an income test as an alternative to the measures it criticized. In other words, the Croll committee says that the income test is not a means test or even a needs test.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest there is a very important additional form of support which has been demonstrated for the government's income guarantee program based on the income test by certain members in the house who in effect seem to claim that they alone have the interests of the older people at heart. This claim is something which will be disputed by most of the members of the house. Let us take a look at *Hansard* for Tuesday, June 21 page

6687 where, at the bottom of the second column the hon. member for Waterloo South (Mr. Saltsman) is reported as saying:

There is a report from the Senate that calls for a different kind of program than a flat rate, old age pension. It is a good report and contains some worthwhile ideas.

I am sure hon. members on the government side will thank the hon. member for Waterloo South for his constructive words in this regard.

I also wish to refer you to *Hansard* for Tuesday, June 14, page 6419 where the hon. member for Danforth (Mr. Scott) speaking on the Canada Assistance Plan is reported as saying:

Perhaps before this debate ends, Mr. Chairman, we will have an opportunity of going into the final report of the special committee of the Senate on aging. I wish my friend opposite, if he has not already read it, would read it. The report is a great tribute to the chairman of that committee, Senator Croll. The foreward to the report, and the report itself, adopts what I feel is probably the most humane and reasonable approach to the whole problem of aging in Canada. If the philosophy contained in this report were carried over into the legislation before us now,—

The hon. member is referring to the Canada Assistance Plan.

—I think the measure would meet with a far greater response.

Let me again put the words of the hon. member for Danforth on record when he said that the Croll report adopted what he felt was probably the most humane and reasonable approach to the whole question of aging in Canada.

Finally, let me turn to *Hansard* for Wednesday, June 29, pages 7050 to 7052. We find there the remarks of the very charming hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) who, in some ways, is the most severe critic in the house of the government's proposal to base further aid for pensioners on the income test. At page 7051 she is reported as saying the following:

The Senate committee on aging pointed out a way in which this problem could and should be solved. As a matter of fact the Senate committee suggested that we should have a guaranteed income for those on old age security pension.

Further on, she went on to say with her usual eloquence:

The Senate committee on aging proposed that we have a minimum income in this country and that we begin with the recipients of the old age security pension. I should like to ask the minister if he would be good enough to send me very soon the complete text of the speech he made at the opening of the welfare conference in Vancouver.