

*Old Age Security Act*

The Chair may not, in my opinion, make this restriction as it would severely handicap members who might have comments or suggestions for the committee concerning the bill.

**Mr. Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) has proposed a motion for the bill to be sent back to committee so that the minister find ways of making it acceptable.

I do not wish to boast, but I have the impression that the advice I am about to give is calculated to help the minister in his work.

• (1520)

Mr. Speaker, I received yesterday a letter from a 61-year-old head of a family, disabled for 10 years, whose disability allowance was cut out when his wife became eligible for the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement. The same thing happens to disabled wives when the husband becomes eligible for the old age security pension.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, the motion moved by the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) was most honest, because it applied to that group of individuals.

The hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) has introduced a motion to enable anyone reaching age 60 to receive the old age security pension. I congratulate the hon. member and tell him that his motion was very relevant since it dealt with people 60 and over. And there is a lot of people, Mr. Speaker, who have to live on the crumbs of the welfare plan. How many of those people are tired and incapable of any continued effort? How many are now out of a job and unable to get one because of their age? How many feel oppressed by the system because manpower is abundant and there is generally no room for people of 60 and over in the labour force?

There are people who have to leave their jobs because of exhaustion or fatigue and are further oppressed by another body of the government, the Unemployment Insurance Commission. In fact, if a worker leaves his job without reason he is not eligible for unemployment benefits. So, for the Unemployment Insurance Commission fatigue is not a valid reason. If someone loses his benefits because he left without a serious reason, he cannot even qualify for unemployment insurance by reason of illness because in the minds of the doctors of the Unemployment Insurance Commission fatigue is not an illness.

Mr. Speaker, it is with all that in mind that the hon. member for Lotbinière proposed his motion.

Every day I receive letters from people in my riding who tell me about their hardship. As recently as yesterday a lady who is 60 and whose husband is 62 wrote me that because they owned a small house the Quebec social welfare service was giving them only \$119 a month. How can two people clothe themselves, feed themselves, heat a house, pay for taxes, power and telephone and all other bare necessities of life with such an allocation? The lady who wrote me lists all they have to pay every month. In their case, they have only \$35 left each month to buy food.

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel).]

I admit these people have not yet reached the eligible age, as indicated in the bill, but they have the same requirements as those who are 65 years old and over.

The handicapped in Quebec are another group of people who are having a rough time. They include persons of both sexes and of all ages. There are those who were born with a handicap and others who have been disabled by illness or accident. No matter how old they were when disaster struck they are up against serious problems. Besides being disabled or handicapped, they often have to cope with poverty.

I have been informed of two rather unfortunate cases— involving two disabled people aged 45 and 52, living with their mothers. The older women having no income, the other two were granted a small disability allowance. But that allowance is now going to be reduced because their mothers, respectively aged 70 and 72, had an increase in pension last spring. Mr. Speaker, to my mind it is ridiculous for a handicapped person of 52 to have no other means of subsistence than what he can get from his 72-year old mother's pension.

That is why I moved, under the terms of Standing Order 75(5) the following motion:

That Bill C-147, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act be amended by adding the following subclause to Clause 1 immediately after line 9:

"(2) Under the provisions of the present Act and regulations, a monthly pension may be paid to every handicapped person who has reached age 50."

Mr. Speaker, the passage of this motion would be somewhat a harbinger of joy in the families afflicted with illness. A while ago, I referred to cases of disabled people who had to be supported by their parents, but we also know of cases of disabled persons who live at their children's expense.

Let us assume the case of a 60-year old disabled father, receiving social benefits and having one or two daughters who are working; every time his daughters get a weekly \$5 increase, the father's allowance is proportionately reduced.

Mr. Speaker, strange things happen in the province of Quebec every time the Liberals come back to power.

I will give you another example. It is about a disabled family man, father of five living children. One of his children is working the year round while the other four go to school. Two of the latter find a job following the summer holidays. Therefore the investigator comes to the house with the result that the father loses his disability pension because there are three boys who can provide for the family's living.

Once back to school in September, the oldest of the boys, who is 20 years old, applies for a scholarship and a loan. And the Department of Education tells this student that he is not eligible either for the scholarship or for the loan because he worked during the summer months. He earned \$750. This student appeals giving the reasons why he is broken: He was forced by the welfare bureau to earn a living for his parents. The Department of Education turns down those arguments, saying that the department cannot hold the young man responsible for the money he gave to his parents.