

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

However, Mr. Speaker, we have a particular series of Bills before the House on which it is very easy to get up and say, I am for apple pie, motherhood and this kind of thing. Yet the last time I spoke I brought into this discussion my mother, who happens to be a senior citizen, and a Member opposite said: I bet your wrist will be slapped when you get home to see Mom. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have seen Mom since then. She said: "You know, son, I live in a senior citizen's apartment dwelling and I am enjoying my apartment and my way of life. Yes, I would like to have an increase higher than 6 per cent", because, do not forget, we are still speaking of an increase in the new year for senior citizens. "But", she said, "I can understand that I am not on the supplement and I, too, should be part of a battle which encompasses many sectors of society, both by law and the involuntary way by those people who cannot find jobs, and those people who voluntarily come along with the idea of the six and five program". In that vein, a labour leader said to a group of us on the weekend, "I have frozen my salary. I did not take a 6 per cent increase or 5 per cent increase; I have frozen it absolutely. That seems to me to say that even the labour movement recognizes that we all have to make sacrifices and join together in some kind of restraint to help bring inflation down, to help spread the wealth of the country more equitably.

Mr. Kristiansen: That is voluntary.

Mr. Masters: So we say that this Bill is part of the over-all six and five program to help fight inflation and it requires the assistance of everyone to be effective. I believe the results of the last while show that in fact inflation is coming down. I regret very much that in debating on behalf of those people affected by such legislation, Members opposite, inadvertently, I think, are feeding the expectations of inflation forever. It will never, ever change by a point or two downwards because Members opposite keep telling us every day: no, it will never get down to 6 per cent so you, no matter who you are, if you are in business you had better ask for a 10 per cent increase for your product. If you offer a service, you had better ask for 15 per cent because inflation is never going to come down. So it goes, Mr. Speaker, that we hear the gospel of inflation as a fact of life from Members opposite.

I am sure that is not what they want. I am sure they know that we have to bring inflation down and that we have to be in a competitive position with the rest of the world. Current statistics indicate that we have not been doing very well but that now we are beginning to. I honestly believe, as I support the Bill, that we will see a time when the six per cent inflation rate will be the norm rather than the abnormal. But, for goodness sake, it cannot happen by itself. It has to happen with all of us urging people to get behind this country of ours and to bring their expectations into line so that the common good is served.

● (2050)

There are times when we forget what are our Party affiliations in the interests of the people of the country. Senior citizens have a great feeling for the country because they

helped build it. Also they have a great feeling for their children and their children's children. They would rather not have to accept less of an increase, but they will. They still say to me that they respect the fact that the Government is doing what it can and that they will join with many other sectors which have voluntarily and involuntarily joined the fight against inflation. They are willing to do their part, to accept their responsibility.

This piece of legislation, as unpalatable as it might be to some of us, is part of the great psychological battle we are fighting to demonstrate unequivocally to the people of Canada that we must have a lower inflation rate. It will be lower if we all accept it, but it will never go down if the leaders of the country keep going around telling people day in and day out that they are living in a dream world, that this will never happen, and that they have to prepare themselves for higher and higher inflation. This is the exact message which has been coming through this debate day in and day out, that inflation will not come down. They do not want it to go down; it is not in their political interests for the inflation rate to go down or for other things to happen in the country. I make a friendly, passionate plea to Hon. Members opposite and to the people of Canada that these are difficult times, but there is a glimmer of light ahead if we all work together to help bring down the inflation rate. If we work together we will enjoy even more this great country of ours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the Conservative amendment to Bill C-131. I must say that I have some concern about the amendment. Of course we do not want the Bill to be before the House. In fact, we think it should be withdrawn. There is no time like the present to do it just before Christmas. We understand that the amendment is really a grandfather clause which attempts to restore indexing at the same rate as it would have been in two years' time had there been no Bill C-131.

I am surprised that we have not heard Liberal Members supporting the amendment. It is one thing they could really support. This afternoon we heard the very jubilant Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) announce that inflation was now down to 9.7 per cent in Canada and that the Liberal program was working. Of course this is good news, especially just before Christmas. I am sure most elderly Canadians also felt the same way. These same Canadians, if they were aware of Bill C-131, unfortunately did not have enough time for their organizations to study the Bill. So often there is no adequate time for them to know, to react and to have input in Bills such as these, especially if they live in western Canada.

However, many of them know about this Bill which is designed to cut the indexing on their pensions in the new year. I am sure they sighed a big sigh of relief this afternoon when they heard that inflation was going down. I am sure they thought that now the Government, thank goodness, does not have to use Bill C-131 to fight the war against inflation or to