

Old Age Security

the part of the bill which says how much money a person will get in any quarter, and it goes like this. The amount:

- (a.1) for a month in the six-month period commencing on April 1, 1973 is the basic amount;
- (a.2) for a month in the payment quarter commencing on October 1, 1973—

Until I let Your Honour know differently, I shall be quoting from one sentence. I continue with the words that say that the sum to be received:

—is the amount obtained by multiplying

- (i) the basic amount,

by

- (ii) the ratio that the average for the ten-month period that ended on July 31, 1973 of the Consumer Price Index for Canada, as published by Statistics Canada under the authority of the *Statistics Act*, for each month in that ten-month period bears to the average for the ten-month period that ended on September 30, 1972 of that Consumer Price Index for each month in that ten-month period; and

- (b) for a month in any payment quarter commencing after December 31, 1973 is the amount obtained by multiplying

- (i) the amount of such pension that might have been paid to such a person for a month in the three-month period next before that payment quarter,

by

- (ii) the ratio that the Consumer Price Index for the first adjustment quarter that relates to that payment quarter bears to the Consumer Price Index for the second adjustment quarter that relates to that payment quarter.

Finally there is a period.

Mr. Lalonde: It is obvious.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It is common practice in this institution for members to criticize what somebody has done but not say how it can be done differently. I thought, having been a printer and having had to work with words in one way or another, and having been in another profession in which one makes use of words to convey ideas, that I might try to see if I could not put in a reasonably simple sentence all that this gobbledygook says. I am not going to move an amendment. I would not suggest that our law should be made so simple that an ordinary person can understand it.

Mr. Baker: Or lawyers couldn't make a living.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My learned friend from Commanche Drive is obviously worried about what would happen to lawyers if the law were written in simple language. But let me indicate what I think should have been done. I know we are having a bit of fun about this, but I am also making a serious point. The individuals who draft these laws, instead of trying as hard as they can to make them obtuse and incomprehensible, should try to make them simple and understandable.

Let me try something on for size. For purposes of this draft I accept what the bill tries to do. I might disagree with some provisions, but I accept what the bill tries to do. Let me read what I think might have been drafted. That clause could say:

The quarterly escalation provided in this act shall take place, each year, in January, April, July and October, and it shall be calculated on the basis of the increase in the Consumer Price Index during the three months that ended two months prior to

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

each January, April, July and October, as compared with the Consumer Price Index in the immediately preceding three months period.

Mr. Blenkarn: It's too simple.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend from Mississauga finds it too simple.

An hon. Member: He's a lawyer.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It might have been useful to put a simple statement like that in the explanatory notes, but it is not there. Perhaps those who draw up the explanatory notes could not figure the clause out. It is really quite simple.

If the Minister of National Health and Welfare, his parliamentary secretary, the government House leader and the very useful help which is sitting in front of the Minister of National Health and Welfare say that I have not taken into account the fact that we must consider the special circumstances that relate to the first payment, the one that starts this October, let me say that I have drafted something to cover that as well. What I have already suggested as a first paragraph would cover the picture in general terms. I see the parliamentary secretary nodding his head. I suspect this is the first time he has understood the bill.

As for the first payments, the first increases which are to come into effect in October and which, by the way, are spelled out in that long sentence I read, the matter could be reduced to this:

The escalation to come into effect in October, 1973, shall be calculated on the basis of the increase in the Consumer Price Index during the ten months from October 1, 1972, to July 31, 1973, as compared with the Consumer Price Index during the ten months from December 1, 1971, to September 30, 1972.

An hon. Member: Explain.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Someone says, explain. If my hon. friend will look at *Hansard* tomorrow, he will realize that that is what all the gobbledygook in the bill is. Tonight it is not as important to make this change as to get the bill through.

However, I am glad that we have gone through this exercise in committee of the whole so that the important and competent officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare who are with us, and they are important and competent, will, next time this kind of legislation is to be drafted, say to the drafters, "For heaven's sake, put this stuff in plain, ordinary language that can be understood."

An hon. Member: Even by the lawyers.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Yes, even by the lawyers, so that they can understand what is in the law without having to seek the advice of counsel. When the minister gets to his feet, I would be glad to hear his comments on what I have been saying.

● (2050)

Now may I ask on what basis the government picked these two particular 10 month periods for the purpose of calculating the increase that is to come into effect in