

Old Age Security Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. The hon. member is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Roche: When I referred to the New Horizons program last evening, I made it clear that my opposition to it was because senior citizens in this country are not entitled to be paid money for projects that they recommend and in which they take part. I am not opposed to the New Horizons program itself—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. The hon. member knows that that is not a point of order; it is a point of explanation or debate. The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) has the floor.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I did not even hear the hon. member speak last night. In fact, I was referring to one of his colleagues who spoke earlier. Even though the cap did not fit, the hon. member insisted on feeling that it did fit and he put it on. However, I did hear one of his colleagues earlier do a good job of damning the program.

I think all the aspects to which I have referred ought to be discussed with the provinces. I wish the present Minister of National Health and Welfare—I admit he has made a good impression on many of us—would go out to the provinces with a real plan. I wish he would say that he does not care whether the premiers are NDP, Conservative, or what-have-you in the Maritimes, that this is what the government thinks is a really good program to replace the present social security patchwork. Let us try it out and see whether it will work. I think it will work. Draw it up and put it across, and invite these people to comment on it. This minister should not be afraid of the premiers of the provinces before he gets there—and I know a lot of this has been going on. I know several of them very well and they are not half as vicious as the minister may think. I am sure they would not be, if he went there and said he had something positive, produced it and asked them to make a start.

• (1520)

I should like to say a few words about another aspect of this whole matter which I think is important, but before I do so I should say again that we intend to support this legislation, not because it represents all we want but because we think it is a step forward. We would like to see old age security at \$150 now, and when we accomplish that goal we will want more. We expect that by then people will have reached a higher level of civilization and we want to think that the elderly can share in the improvement.

I think it is silly and futile to provide old people, young people or people somewhere in between with sufficient pensions and allowances to live decently without taking precaution to see that they can keep the extra money. Often the elderly or people with low incomes are deprived of any increase as soon as or before they get it, because of increases in rents and necessities. These other people take as big a bite out of that increase as they can. In my view, the minister should be trying to establish this protection when he visits the provincial representatives. He should say that there is no sense in giving these people an

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increase unless protection is provided so they can keep the increase.

What does this entail? I suggest it means we must devise some form of price agency or review board to monitor prices. Such an agency would have to ensure that prices are held steady in order that the people I have referred to can afford more at their new level of income. We will have to establish rental boards. The province of Quebec is probably in the forefront in this regard, although perhaps it has not gone far enough. It does have a rental control board to which people can make representations if they feel their rents are unjust. We must take that sort of approach, and we must adopt other controls to protect these people from being gouged of their pension increases.

One may say that this cannot be done. I suggest that it can be done and I want to give one or two examples of how it can be done. A few years ago the people across this country grumbled and growled about the terrific cost of insurance on their cars. They complained about their young people not being able to drive cars because of the high cost of insurance. They complained about the high cost of accidents. When people were involved in accidents without being covered under a special policy, they were ruined for life. At least the people in two provinces today have discovered that you can have public car insurance which covers accidents at a cost less than that payable in other provinces without similar schemes. A third province has announced its intention to venture into such an insurance scheme this spring. With the success shown in these provinces, I suggest this can be done.

I do not know how we are going to accomplish what we have in mind to protect our citizens, but I do know that in at least two provinces experiments are being conducted with a view to protecting their citizens by means of providing medicinal drugs as a public utility. Every time I heard the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) suggesting that we should do something for our old people in respect of drug costs, I feel like reminding the House that years ago our ancestors thought that everyone should build his own piece of road and put a turnpike on it. But finally we got the picture and built our own national road with our own collective resources so that everyone could use it. You should hear the screams in British Columbia whenever anyone proposes putting a toll on a bridge now. We have had enough of that and we do not want any more.

I suggest that these things have to be done as a country. This idea of giving people increases and failing to protect them is not enough. We must adopt measures to safeguard these increases when we have them. We must protect people against having these increases taken away by stronger and more ruthless segments in our communities. We must prevent these more powerful people from moving in on any group which receives a little extra pittance.

I commend this action to the minister when he meets with provincial representatives, because it is something which will call for agreement between federal and provincial authorities. There is no reason under heaven why the provinces cannot cede or give authority to the federal