

It is not our view that people of 60 years of age be compelled or urged to retire, but in a country like Canada citizens should be enabled to retire in comfort and dignity at 60 if they so desire. We would consider gradually lowering the age of benefit eligibility if an applicant is no longer employed.

A Progressive Conservative government would ensure that when a wife or husband reaches age 65 the spouse is deemed eligible for old age security and guaranteed income benefit if he or she is not employed and is more than 50 years of age.

I find that this is what the majority of Canadians want today, contrary to the remarks made by the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Maine) that people do not want to retire at 60 today. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre put it very well when he said that with the rat race today in certain industries people are exhausted at 60, and that no contribution is made after 60.

Mr. Cullen: Come on!

Mr. McKenzie: In certain industries today one cannot make a contribution after 55, and I refer to the industry in which I was involved. That is communications, and I observed this because I was in that field for 30 years. I am speaking from some knowledge, not just something I pulled out of a hat.

The position paper goes on to say:

The withering away of savings has put in jeopardy the private pension plans of many Canadians. A Progressive Conservative government will encourage effective action to bring remedial justice to people whose financial security has been undermined by inflation.

I just do not agree that the answer to every problem is to pay people more money. The government also has an obligation in this field to do something about inflation. That would help senior citizens in two ways, and not just with an increase.

The position paper continues:

Far too many senior citizens are unable to find space in housing units. A Progressive Conservative government will make meaningful aid available so that the provinces will be able to accelerate the construction of senior citizens' housing.

We favour the expansion of the New Horizon program in order that the valuable resources resting in our old population may be drawn upon to their benefit and that of society as a whole.

I would like to give further support to this bill by reading from a speech made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) in Gander, Newfoundland, on June 5, 1974. He stated:

Let's talk about the older folk; those who have been trying to get by these days on the old age pension and the guaranteed income supplement. They know—and no one knows any better—what the cost of living has done to them. Every month—as prices go up for food, clothing, and shelter—the value of their pensions goes down.

Our party fought for a better deal for them in the last election and throughout the last parliament. And we still are. When we are elected, we will provide an immediate increase in the basic old age pension of \$7 a month and for those in greatest need of assistance, we will provide an additional \$15 a month.

That will bring the total of the basic pension and guaranteed income supplement up to \$202 a month. I'm not saying that's the moon, but it's an attempt to provide a basic adjustment in pension income that relates to the rapid increase in the cost of living.

I will draw my remarks to a close by saying that I hope no more hon. members will rise to oppose this motion.

Mr. Cullen: Cut off debate?

Old Age Security

Mr. McKenzie: Don't talk it out; just agree to this motion. You would really get a feather in your cap if you supported some private member's motion for a change. Maybe the hon. member has a surprise for us this afternoon. I hope he will support this motion to his fullest. I am quite sure that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) know of ways to find the money to support this motion today.

Mr. Béchard: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. McKenzie: Oh yes, first time.

Mr. Béchard: I would like to ask the hon. member if he is aware that the Conservative Party in all its history since 1867 only gave \$16 per month to the old people.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1640)

Mr. McKenzie: I remind the hon. member that his party was tagged with the name "six-buck boys", and the people of Canada have not forgotten.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The figure should be \$19, not \$16.

Mr. Béchard: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): The hon. member for Bonaventure-Iles-de-la-Madeleine on a point of order.

Mr. Béchard: Madam Speaker, we have just been tagged "six-buck boys". I feel the hon. member is exaggerating. We gave around \$209, that is \$209 less \$16.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. The hon. member is starting a debate. This is not a point of order. The hon. member for Lotbinière.

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on a most important motion introduced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). The motion echoes similar motions under Nos. 10, 26 and 23, including one by my colleague for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier) to bring down pensionable age to 60.

It was my impression that during the last federal election a consensus was reached among the parties. It was my understanding it had been settled once and for all that if this government was re-elected, a bill would be passed to bring pensionable age down to 60.

An hon. Member: There was no commitment about that.

Mr. Fortin: Madam Speaker, somebody from the other side says there was no commitment. I could table in this House an advertisement by the Liberal government, the Liberal party, that were distributed from door to door in my constituency. It was even dropped from an airplane