

Old Age Security

Mr. Knowles: I hope we succeed. Mr. Speaker, in your tentative suggestions as to the points that we might consider you reminded us of the amendment and the subamendment which were moved to the address in reply to the speech from the throne last January. At least, Your Honour referred to the amendment; I may say that there was also a subamendment. I remember them quite well, but I have read them again and the Leader of the Opposition also referred to them.

The amendment that was moved in January dealt with the amount of the pension. The subamendment that was moved by my leader dealt with the eligible age of the recipients of the pension. The amendment now proposed by the hon. member for Grey-Bruce makes no reference to amount or to eligible age. His amendment deals with another aspect altogether, namely whether or not there should be reimposed a means test, a needs test or a requirement to disclose income.

I would ask Your Honour to consider squarely that there are these three aspects of the old age pension question, and each should stand on its own feet. There is the question of the amount; there is the question of the eligible age; and there is the question whether or not there should be a means test.

Your Honour is quite right in saying that during the course of this session the house has taken a decision on the question of the amount. It did so when it voted down the amendment which was proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. Your Honour is also quite right in saying that this house took a decision on the question of the eligible age. It did so when it turned down the amendment moved by my leader, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam. But this house has not taken a decision during the course of this session on the question whether or not there should be a means test in the application of the pension, a higher pension, an increased portion of the pension, or in any other way. Much has been said during the course of this session about the means test, but there has been no decision whatever made upon the question in any way whatsoever.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think the clear rule that we in the house have to observe, that one cannot put forward a matter upon which the house has taken a decision, is not offended in any way by the carefully drawn amendment that has been presented by the hon. member for Grey-Bruce.

[Mr. McCleave.]

Despite the argument of the Leader of the Opposition that the motion standing on the order paper under the name of the Minister of National Health and Welfare does not stand in the way of this motion, I can imagine that the Minister of National Health and Welfare may try to argue the other way. He may try to argue that his motion is already on the order paper, and therefore we cannot now introduce the subject in this way.

I would remind Your Honour that the rule with respect to this point is to be found in citation 234 (1), and I should like to read the relevant part of it:

The ancient doctrine that the redress of grievances should be considered before the grant of supplies is maintained in the House of Commons of Canada—

Then we get down to some provisos, and we find:

—provided that the discussion shall not relate to any decision of the House during the current session—

It may be argued that there is on the order paper a motion that deals with the question of a needs test, or a means test, or a requirement to disclose financial resources, and that what my hon. friend for Grey-Bruce is seeking is something other than this. But, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the minister's motion is on the order paper, even the fact that it has been transferred from government notices of motions to government orders, does not mean that the house has taken a decision with respect to the matter. In fact, it has not taken any decision on its substance at all.

Naturally, Mr. Speaker, I did not know that this matter was coming up, and therefore I am not briefed in terms of having documents in front of me. But I do have memories in this regard, and one case in particular is in my mind. In the session of 1957-58 I had on the order paper a bill to provide for annual vacations with pay, which I proposed as part of a labour code. During the course of that session the Conservative government of that day introduced a bill providing something in the same field, an annual vacation with pay. A point of order was raised to the effect that my bill was like the government's bill and could therefore not be proceeded with, yet Mr. Speaker Michener ruled that no decision had been taken on the government bill. Mind you, Mr. Speaker, that bill had received first reading but had not yet been called for second reading.