

*Old Age Security Act Amendment*

way of entertainment. I wonder sometimes how cruel we can be.

I suggest that the minister look at this bill again, and keep in mind the rapidly rising cost of living. Let him think of these people who, through no fault of their own, find they cannot sustain themselves, and let him increase the pension to \$105 across the board to everyone who is entitled to old age security.

Let us take another case, that of two old pensioners receiving \$75 a month each or \$150 jointly. If one or both of them make an extra \$120 a month they cease to be entitled to a supplement. Does this not encourage people to remain idle? Is this not a way of saying to people in this age bracket "You are worn out; you are through and ready for the scrap heap"?

Why should we legislate against the unfortunate? I maintain that this is just one area in which we are encouraging the raising of a race of weak people.

A good point has been made by an hon. member in this debate exemplified by a man and a woman, both pensioners, contemplating marriage. The man is getting \$75 old age security and because he is physically fit he is making \$120 a month. Therefore he would receive no supplement. The woman is entitled to old age security or \$75 and, under the bill, would receive \$30 supplement. However, they wish to get married and live out their twilight years in relative happiness. If they do this, then the woman has to pay a matrimonial tax of \$30 per month. We know that there are many taxes. As a matter of fact, the Minister of National Revenue is not here right now but I am betting he is in his office trying to calculate how he can put a tax on the air we breathe because that is about the only thing left on which we do not pay taxes at the present time.

These are some of the points which the minister should consider. After all, we sometimes say that the road to purgatory is paved with good intentions.

For some years we have been advocating an across the board increase in old age security to \$100 a month. I think this figure should be \$105. I should like to bring to the attention of the house at this time the fact that the socialist party also have agreed the pension should be increased to \$105 a month. Let us take a good look at the legislation. I should like the minister to review the whole legislative program. Let us look at it objectively, keeping in mind the dignity of the individual. Let us not make these people crawl.

[Mr. Irvine.]

Let us suppose that no tests were required and that an across the board increase were granted. Think of the savings we could make in the administration. I was speaking to one of the welfare officers of the province of Ontario and I asked him what it cost to make a casual call on a person with regard to old age assistance. He said that the cost of a casual call was \$5.75. I think that a saving could be effected if we made a complete survey of the cost of this program.

If these pensioners were not required to pass a test, they would not have to make out income tax returns or other returns such as eligibility returns, or whatever you wish to call them. Many of these people have never made out an income tax form in their lives and if they were faced with this necessity they would have to go to someone else for assistance. Many people at this age are a little confused, and so filling out these forms will only add to their burden. I say that if we were to pay \$105 across the board we would certainly get a good share of that money back in income taxes and other taxes, and we would be releasing more money for circulation throughout the country. According to the recent indices, it is possible we might need this extra impetus before too long.

I should also like to point out that it would be necessary to employ a great number of people to check these returns and these applications. Think of the savings in the cost of the administration in this one area only. Let us also think of the great savings in empire building. I think it is a readily recognized fact that there is enough empire building going on here now. Why should we encourage more of it?

I believe that if we grant these pensioners an increase across the board we will be respecting the dignity of the individual person, our fellow man. I think this is of prime importance.

Let us consider now the test required under this legislation. It has been called many different things, and there are many names we could call it, but perhaps they would be unparliamentary. I think we must admit that this bill does include a means test. You can call it a means test, an eligibility test, a needs test, a financial standing test or an income test. Somebody suggested we might call it "the MacEachen formula test".

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Irvine:** But, Mr. Speaker, when the smoke screen has disappeared, all the clouds