

this kind as not interrupting presence in Canada. This is the dilemma in which the minister finds himself. We have a government, with the desire to help people who have served Canada well, such as the constituent of the hon. member, but because of the way Parliament passes legislation and the way in which regulations are drawn, the minister finds his hands tied. He feels badly about this and wants to do something about it.

I should point out as well that investigation has revealed that the number of cases where a resident of Canada could not qualify for the pension on the normal date of eligibility because he was unable to count an absence from Canada, as a member of the Canadian forces, as presence in Canada was very small and occurred only where there had been extended periods of other absence from Canada. Although the number is small, the government appreciates the difficulty a delay in eligibility for the pension may cause the person concerned.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. He may be allowed to continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Penner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to the members for the courtesy extended to me to continue. I wish to say what the minister plans to do. What is required is an amendment to the Old Age Security Act to authorize the making of a regulation defining presence in Canada, and intervals of absence from Canada that shall be deemed not to have interrupted presence in Canada. If you understand that, Mr. Speaker, I wish you would explain it to the rest of us. However, after some prolonged discussion with very learned officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare in the front lobby of this House, I can say that I do understand it now. A regulation could then be made whereby absences from Canada of a resident under prescribed circumstances would be deemed not to have interrupted presence in Canada if such a person returned to Canada at the termination of his duties or reached pensionable age while so engaged.

In certain circumstances such a person would be required to have had in Canada a permanent place of abode to which he intended to return or to have maintained in Canada a self-contained domestic establishment during his employment out of Canada. The government intends to introduce an amendment to the Old Age Security Act, and if this is approved by parliament—and I believe there is no doubt that it will—it will allow for appropriate changes to the old age security regulations. The government is anxious to ensure that veterans and all other Canadians receive just and fair treatment under all types of legislation. So we expect that amendment very soon and I am sure it will pass all stages without undue debate.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member for Thunder Bay (Mr. Penner) launched into his speech, I felt sorrier for myself than I already did that I have the kind of voice that will not let me speak for my full time today. When I looked at the motion in the name of the hon. member for Okanagan

Old Age Security Act

Boundary (Mr. Whittaker), I realized it related to one very narrow point in the Old Age Security Act and I assumed that the rule of relevancy would require that we confine our remarks to that point. But my good friend from Thunder Bay did me the honour of reciting the whole history of old age pensions in Canada. I say he did me the honour because he started that history from the very day I was born, June 18, 1908. That was the day, these several decades ago, that the Government Annuities Act was given second reading and put through the House of Commons.

I followed with interest the history of the subsequent pension legislation which the hon. member for Thunder Bay recited, and the various changes in the Old Age Security Act and in the regulations thereunder. I was hoping he would carry right on and tell us of the further improvements that are to be made in the near future.

Mr. Whicher: Tell us where we are going to get the money while you are at it.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend should not worry about money these days. When three young men can visit Toronto and while there obtain contracts for \$1 million each, why worry about money? As I say, I am glad the hon. member for Thunder Bay made clear that the necessary amendment will be introduced, and that it will be in keeping with the resolution of the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary. However, I was hoping he would tell us at the same time that other changes would be made in respect of old age security. We have come a long way from June 18, 1908, but what we need now is a provision for pensions of at least \$200 a month payable at age 60 and, in addition, a few other improvements.

Mr. Whicher: Tell us where we will get the money?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My friend from Bruce (Mr. Whicher) agrees with me completely. He is one of my publicity agents. He has already drawn attention to the way my clamouring for these things over the years has paid off. I am still clamouring.

Mr. Whicher: Now the public is paying.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Never mind about the fact that the public pays, because it is according to ability to pay. The fact that we have pensions of at least \$100 a month, plus quarterly escalation, on a universal basis, means we have provided for our older people a relatively better position in society than was the case 20, 30 or 40 years ago. As we go along with this program on a universal basis, projecting the principle of equality, we make our society that much better. So, Mr. Speaker, I am glad you did not stop my good friend from Thunder Bay in his interesting recital of the 65 years and nine months or so in which I have lived and through which we have had improvements in the pension legislation of this country. I trust that, like the good Liberals they are over there, when we have further gains they will all stand and applaud those further improvements.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!