

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

supported what has been referred to as the "six and five solution". I do not know that one should automatically assume that, when a piece of legislation is presented to the House which has merit and happens to have contained therein a particular formula, a simple snapping of the fingers to resurrect that formula when applied to any other piece of legislation should result automatically in someone concluding that Hon. Members will support the legislation in a sort of "knee-jerk" reaction to the Bill which is introduced.

Very clearly, Bill C-124, which began the process, was a Bill designed to meet a certain set of circumstances which affected, among other people, Members of this House of Commons. Members of the House have been entitled to an indexed form of remuneration increase on an annual basis, and I found it extremely difficult to sit here and vote in favour of a constant increase in my salary as a Member of Parliament while my constituents suffered from lack of employment.

I also found it quite easy to justify the imposition of a form of restrained growth in salaries for members of another privileged class, the Public Service, and there is no doubt but that they are. They have an opportunity to continue to serve the public without the same general fears of possible loss of employment which are imposed upon members of the private sector. We have seen hundreds of thousands, possibly two million of those persons who no longer have employment at all, and yet within the Public Service we know that security of employment must be given some monetary value. Quite frankly, I felt no hesitation at all in supporting Bill C-124.

I do, however, have substantial reason for opposing Bill C-131, despite the fact that it also has a six and five formula appended to it. The reason is very simple. We are dealing in this piece of legislation with an element of society which has withdrawn from the work force. We are dealing with a group of Canadians who no longer are in a position to make up in the long run what might be lost today. We are dealing with people who have paid their dues to society, who have contributed to the very essence of our nation, who have contributed to the fact that we are here today in this place, free and secure. These are the people to whom we, as a society, have an obligation, and that obligation transcends any consideration of monetary restraint. They are indeed, in my mind, the most deserving class in society to whom we, as Members of Parliament, should pay tribute for their contribution to our society, and regard in a special fashion when it comes to dealing with rights to which they have become entitled.

In terms of the actual consequences of this legislation, we were advised just this week that the inflation rate has declined and that decline now is measured at 9.8 per cent on an annual basis. The income increase under this Bill is fixed at 6 per cent. So we are now looking at a 3.8 per cent decline in an increase. I use those words because that in fact is what it is in terms of today's dollars. But in terms of constant dollar valuation, there is clearly a reduction in the purchasing power of those pension payments which are made available to our senior citizens as a consequence of this legislation. For that reason, and for the reasons I have earlier described in terms of our obligation to

this segment of society, I am opposed to the Bill and will vote against it.

I would like to mention some of the concerns which I have had with respect to the Government's defence of this legislation. I recognize that it is part of a program designed to dilute the expectation for constant inflationary increases in society. The Government also regards it in some way as an indication of its grappling with the control of the public purse, hopefully achieving a reduction in federal expenditures, and they have done so at the cost of a particular segment of society, as I have indicated. If you analyze the growth of the inflationary pressures, you find that the chief culprit is not simply the Government. It is Government in the sense that one of the large component factors in the increase in the consumer price index is the cost of energy. Cost of energy is reported to have accounted for an 18.2 per cent increase over the year. With that kind of an increase, controlled by Government, one can well understand how there is a reduction, as reported in the press recently, of the inflationary pressures. That reduction is retarded because Government is still intruding in a fashion which in itself creates the very inflationary pressures they have come to blame on society at large.

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We are also aware of the recent increases in excise taxes imposed on those evil products of tobacco and alcohol, taxes which were not restricted to six and five but which are running at almost 14 per cent. Now, I know that not everyone needs a smoke or a drink, but I find it a little hypocritical for the Government to come before the public and say: "We expect you to do your part, while we do not do ours". An example is the Government saying that it has begun to restrain the demand upon the public purse, yet we see the kind of treatment accorded another group of special people, the senior bureaucrats, and in particular a certain Senator Michael Pitfield who a short time ago was awarded a special pension arrangement which will see the extraction from that same public purse of some \$100,000 over a period of years to be added to Mr. Pitfield's pension plan.

Mr. Jarvis: He is an independent Senator.

Mr. Gamble: I can understand that is the kind of designation they have given to him. However, having regard to the way in which he served so faithfully the current Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau), he has been rewarded in a fashion which I am sure most Canadians would like to tap into but which is not available to them, certainly not to the people affected by Bill C-133. The Government suggests it is about to restrain its expenditures and endeavours to convince Canadians that the process is one which will achieve a reduction in inflation for the benefit of all Canadians, and then turns around and says except, of course, with respect to the privileged few in society. For them they are prepared to make some different arrangements. Those are the kinds of things which surely make the public sit up and take notice and regard Government actions with a great deal of disbelief.