

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

over 3 per cent on next month's cheque. They will get a bigger cheque, but not as big as anticipated. However, we hope to give them—and I suppose Hon. Members are going to laugh if I use the word present, but I am going to use it anyway, for want of a better word—we think that by the end of 1983 and the end of 1984, we will be able to give them a rate of inflation that has been cut by one-half. That is what we expect to be able to offer. We think that in the long run, senior citizens stand to benefit most if inflation is kept as low as possible. That is the basic philosophy behind this Bill. We want inflation to be lower than it has been during the last few years. As I said earlier, an attempt was made to bring inflation down by controlling prices and wages in 1975, but that had just about the same effect as the Hon. Member's amendment would have. As soon as controls are lifted, there is a general scramble and the inflationary spiral starts again. That is what is wrong with the Hon. Member's amendment.

• (1620)

[English]

In his amendment the Hon. Member for Okanagan North says let us give them only 6 per cent and 5 per cent; all the pensioners do not need the supplement, but that is money put in the bank. We will give them that full amount back in 1985.

Mr. Dantzer: Mr. Speaker, in her speech the Hon. Minister misinterpreted my amendment. My amendment asks only that the supplements paid into GIS be transferred back into OAS, nothing more and nothing less. That will cost the Government no more money. The monies presently in GIS because of the supplements go back into OAS, and are then invested on that basis. So that all the monies being lost will not be replaced, just that amount.

Miss Bégin: With all due respect, I think the Hon. Member just contradicted himself. I started to say, and I regret I have to say it, that the amendment presented is very badly worded. What I have just expressed is the legal opinion that I received. In trying to correct me, the Hon. Member stated that it was not costing anything and then two minutes later said it was going to cost something but not too much. That is the whole point of the argument. That is why I oppose the amendment, because it would cost millions of dollars and would not bring inflation under control.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, occasionally on the floor of the House there are negotiations. If the wording could be amended to reflect the intent of the Hon. Member for Okanagan North (Mr. Dantzer), is the Minister indicating that with unanimous consent we could agree to such a wording change? Members of our Party would be happy to do it, and I am sure the NDP would as well. If that is what the Minister is implying, we accept that offer and I think you can get something like that from the NDP.

Miss Bégin: That is not what I said, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) should know better, but I think he is playing politics once more, on the backs of

seniors this time. The Hon. Member for Okanagan North has indicated clearly that this Bill will cost money. That is the very simple question I would put to him: Does this Bill cost money? The answer is yes, the Bill will cost millions of dollars. I have a figure of some \$65 million which this Bill will cost. Even if it is less than that, it will still cost Canadians millions of dollars to tell seniors who do not need the supplement that after two years of a national campaign to bring down inflation to six and five, well, that was money in the bank; now take the inflationary money and spend it.

That is not the purpose of this Bill and not the purpose of this package of bills which affect as many Canadians as possible to make sure we cut in half the rate of inflation. Now, the Hon. Member may not be pleased with good news, but this morning for the first time in a long time we have single digit inflation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Bégin: That is what counts. That is what we want, what the seniors want. I repeat, all seniors who have need of a supplement are fully protected and will receive full indexation of their pensions. That is what is important.

Mrs. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister would explain why, if inflation is down, this Bill is necessary?

Miss Bégin: I will answer at the end of my speech if there is time, Mr. Speaker. I will try to explain once more to the Member what I have said often in committee and in this House.

Again, the six and five rate of inflation, half of what we had six months ago, is exactly what we want to see happen. So we are not going to tell Canadians, "You know, do not worry, these crazy Liberals, they have in mind this idea to just put the money in the bank and we will give it to you a little later". We are not going to accept an amendment that does that.

This is not a game we are playing. It is a serious mobilization of all Canadians, including seniors who will not cheat on their responsibilities. During the four weeks of debate on this Bill in committee and in the House I heard unbelievable speeches from the Opposition, trying to make everyone cry for the seniors. Well, my job is to be the special voice of seniors. There are many voices in favor of seniors on this side of the House, of course, but the very special voice of seniors in Cabinet—

Mr. Dantzer: Then speak up.

Miss Bégin: I know seniors, I see them, discuss with them, meet their leaders and receive representations with one purpose in mind: improve their lot. That is the name of the game. What will improve their lot most of all? Bringing down inflation. That is the cost of the food they have to purchase every month, the things which affect their every-day life. They agree, if they are not in need, to be like any other Canadian part of the national battle to bring down inflation. We have signs that it is going to happen.