

*Old Age Security Act Amendment*

There are one or two other passages which I think should be placed on the record because they are very appropriate in this context. He wrote:

Not the least of this budget's many implications is that wage earners can expect a sharp boost in their tax liabilities when the government's medicare scheme goes into operation, 19 months from now.

So the principle is pretty clearly established. It does not matter what the increase in the gross national product is and the increase in the revenues of the government resulting from the increase in the gross national product. It does not matter about that. The old people of this country, those who need the benefit of increased social security payments, are going to have to pay every last dollar it costs. This is a government which says that it is going to soak the rich to pay the poor—a government that increases sales tax by 1 per cent.

• (10:00 p.m.)

Again, Mr. Newman says:

This deliberately grey, neutral budget confirms the fact that the Pearson government has completed its cycle of welfare legislation, and that from now on the administration's legislative initiatives will be in other directions. It may have been this realization which has reportedly pushed Walter Gordon, Mr. Sharp's predecessor, to take the final step and sever his last remaining ties with the Liberal party.

More significant and more dramatic for the Minister of National Health and Welfare is this concluding paragraph:

But the Sharp budget, as it stands, confirms a drastic alteration in the style of the Pearson government. The period of progressive experimentation has ended, and the era of meticulous orthodoxy has begun.

What an interesting and sorry conversion we have seen over the past two or three weeks while this house has been discussing welfare measures. On the one hand, we have seen the spectacle of the reluctant but complete conversion of the Minister of National Health and Welfare from a rather attractive era within which he experimented, within which he wedded himself to forward-looking and progressive policies and identified himself with the needs and interests of those who need help, to the tame, lame and partisan recital of the financial orthodoxy dictated by the Minister of Finance on the other hand.

In this house, sir, perhaps we may have some sympathy for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As members of parliament we can understand the pressures which have been brought to bear upon him. But as

[Mr. Fulton.]

members of parliament concerned about the welfare of Canadians, particularly older Canadians who need help, as members of parliament concerned with the maintenance of the principle of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and as members of parliament concerned to oppose measures which will penalize those who have subscribed to those principles, we can have nothing but condemnation for the retrogressive and backward step taken by this minister under pressure from his cabinet colleagues.

As members of parliament concerned about the general economic climate and the welfare of Canadians, we can also have nothing but condemnation for a government which so cynically reverses itself. Here I refer once more to the minister's criticism of the hon. member for York South. This is a government which promised universality, which pledged and wedded itself to this principle in connection with medicare on the one hand, but which reverses itself and adheres to careful selectivity determined by departmental officials in connection with old age pensions on the other hand.

How dare this government and this spokesman criticize anybody for hypocrisy when the government made such a complete reversal itself. This is a government which pledged itself to introduce a far-reaching social welfare measure by July 1, 1967 but which reverses itself and said it will not come into effect until July 1, 1968. How dare this government have such effrontery to criticize anybody in this house and allege hypocrisy. How dare the minister, speaking on behalf of a government that has played so fast and loose with every principle of sincerity, which has made the most far-reaching and extravagant election promises but fallen so far short of their implementation, criticize anyone in this parliament for the exposure of the weaknesses of this bill.

These are the questions in the minds of members on this side of the house, Mr. Speaker, as they examine the details of this legislation. What has the minister said? Having tried our level best to improve this legislation, being rebuffed on almost every occasion by the government majority, now faced with a bad bill but admittedly a bill that does a little something, he now accuses us of hypocrisy if we do not vote against the bill.

The minister shakes his head now, but carried away by his own eloquence and pomposity that is what he did say. This is typical of