

*Old Age Security Act*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It is agreed that we will dispense with Private Members' Hour for today?

**Mr. Baldwin:** No vote until after eight o'clock, though.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Perhaps I might say it would be preferable if we were to postpone any vote until after eight o'clock and not take any vote during the time normally set aside as the Private Members' Hour. It has been suggested this would be a good arrangement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It is agreed that this be part of the arrangement?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS****OLD AGE SECURITY ACT****AMENDMENTS RESPECTING AMOUNT OF PENSION,  
MAXIMUM SUPPLEMENT AND ESCALATION  
THEREOF**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-202, to amend the Old Age Security Act, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I was quoting the words of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, if an incompetent mechanic ruins the engine of my car by taking out certain wires he will not be surprised at the result. But under the present government the economy always provides disagreeable surprises.

Even if the Prime Minister is surrounded by so-called competent economists and thinkers, the members of the Economic Council make each year some forecasts which are supposed to be workable, but unfortunately the results are always different from the ones anticipated.

So, Mr. Speaker, in order to avoid more surprises to the Prime Minister as regards the old age security, I would suggest that the present escalation rate of 2 per cent be abolished and replaced by 2 yearly rate pegged to the cost of living index.

Another point I would like to raise is the case of ordinary married couples. Under the present system, married people are severely penalized. Our legislation obliges the head of the family, or the wife if she is older and has reached the pension age, to support his or her spouse in sharing the \$111 received once he or she is eligible for pension. Generally the husband is older and the wife must wait until she reaches the age of 65.

But the wife may be the older. It so happens that I have in mind the case of a 63-year-old man who had withdrawn a disability pension for two years and who saw his pension cancelled last April because his wife was

eligible for old age security pension and for the guaranteed income supplement, which all in all amounted to \$111. Therefore, the wife has an "obligation" toward her husband. This situation is nothing to be proud of for a so-called civilized country.

However a common law couple in the same age bracket is granted two pensions: one for the man and the other for the woman. For those who live together without any marriage contract and who have no "obligation" toward each other, this government is most generous.

Mr. Speaker, if it is possible to support couples who have no marriage contract, I feel that it would be normal to extend the same privileges to married couples.

There is no provision about it in the bill. I suggest that when the head of the family becomes eligible for the pension, his spouse who is disabled or unable to earn his living should become eligible too, whatever his age.

The hon. Minister of Health and Welfare pointed out that the new program as it is would cost \$200 million more than it does now. However \$200 million are nothing by comparison with the government budget of \$13 billion and a national product of \$80 billion in 1970.

In my opinion, no other group deserves security more than those who built our country as we know it. They have worked so much that the government is now burdened with surpluses in several sectors, such as food and clothing.

When the \$40 pension was granted, the government made believe that it was impossible to pay more. The pension was increased to \$111; however, I understand that the old-age security costs now amount to \$720 million.

If all manufacturers, traders and businessmen were satisfied with a minimum, bankruptcy would be close at hand for them. For that matter, ambitious businessmen simply do not aim at a minimum. They aim at a maximum.

The Canadian economy has now become ill because, for too long, the government was satisfied with granting a minimum to students, widows and older citizens. Indeed, our economy is ill. There is a slow-down in all departments. Eventually, we will have to wake up. And if the government's treasury gets empty, despite the normal levy of taxes, only one thing remains to be done; the government should meet the needs of its citizens through new credits. I shall conclude by saying that the Bank of Canada was established to serve the country, and when the fund is exhausted, the government should resort to it to obtain the necessary credits for the implementation of a maximum old-age security program. Such a program is always possible if we make use of the surpluses of the Canadian production. The policy of destruction as applied in payments granted to farmers to promote reduced production, has already lasted too long.

In the end, those who have built this country have won only hardship; consequently, this government, strong in its majority, must act by other means than the 1.4 cent premium.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]