

Old Age Security Act

We, in the Social Credit Party of Canada, have asked the government on several occasions to take steps in this direction. The answer that has been given to us for many years was that this measure might ruin Canada, bring about inflation, and so on.

It is strange to see that a minority government is less afraid of inflation and all this nonsense than a majority government, even if it is run by almost the same people.

On May 4, 1970, the majority Liberal government voted against an increase in old age security pensions. On October 21, 1971, we, in the Social Credit Party, introduced a motion with a view to lowering the eligibility age to 60 and increasing pensions. The Liberals recognized at that time that this motion was justified, but they did not do anything. They were a majority government and I believe that this was the main reason.

It is obvious that all members will vote for this bill. But I regret deeply that the government has not deemed advisable to include in this bill an overall reform of the present system in this area, a reform which was, in a way, underlined in today's order paper under notices of motions, pursuant to Standing Order 75(5).

Mr. Speaker, three members of the Social Credit Party have asked the government to consider today increasing the pension from \$100 to \$200, allowing every person of 60 or over to become eligible for the old age pension if desired, and every person whose spouse has reached 60 to get automatically a monthly \$200 pension.

I am convinced that within a few years or within some time, if we of the Social Credit Party continue to apply pressure on the government on the matter, and if the population is aware of what is going on here, we will obtain the increase in the old age security pensions and the lowering of the eligibility age to 60. I greatly regret that the government goes for small doses, quietly, while trying to create for itself a small political capital each time it takes a turtle's step forward in this field.

Why wait, Mr. Speaker? Canadians at age 60 have paid enough taxes and have worked hard enough to get this inalienable right.

Many people aged 60 must now seek their living from provincial social welfare offices. It is a shame in a country as rich as ours.

Why increase old age pensions to only \$100? Is Canada so poor? Are we short of wheat in Canada? No, Mr. Speaker, because western farmers are paid not to produce. Are we short of milk in Canada? No, Mr. Speaker, the farmers who exceed their milk quota are penalized. Are we short of manpower? No, Mr. Speaker, our unemployed have become legions. Are we short of natural resources? There are so many that the government thinks it should subsidize these resources, especially the companies exploiting them, to maintain prices.

For many years, at all levels of government, remedies to unemployment have been sought as well as solutions to reach a certain justice in distribution. At this stage of my speech, I would like to quote an extract from an editorial dealing with the subject as follows:

For the last five years, all levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal have done their utmost to find remedies to two evils which seem to be here to stay: inflation and unemployment.

[Mr. Beaudoin.]

In spite of the efforts of the authorities, the results are quite relative, particularly as far as unemployment is concerned: it is not unreasonable to think that the situation is not getting better because the means used are for the most part very short term ones.

However there is a suggestion that governments might do well to examine to alleviate unemployment, and it is to set the retirement age at 60 and to grant at that time all the social benefits presently linked to the pension at 65, that is to say, the full old age pension, the complete payment of the pension fund benefits and the pension the retired person contributed to when he was at an employer's service.

I guess some people will object that not all workers would accept with pleasure to retire at 60 because they are still able to work and the situation does not enable them to envisage a reduction of income.

To this serious objection, it must be answered that possible legislation in this direction could provide that retirement at 60 would be optional and not compulsory.

It is of course impossible to go into the particulars that such legislation could include, but it is certain that several jobs could be held by young workers who are only waiting for an opening to enter the labour market and on the other hand, those who would voluntarily retire at 60 could enjoy a much longer period of rest and leisure—

Mr. Speaker, like the editorial writer, I agree that a person of 60, who has worked hard all his life and who wants to retire, should have the choice to get his old age security pension in order to leave his job and to rest while travelling or doing odd jobs in order to enjoy the last years of his life.

Mr. Speaker, I think we lack nothing in Canada or, rather, we lack a government which will one day succeed in establishing greater distributive justice. I think it's the only thing lacking, and I hope that the people will soon have had enough of those governments with temporary and inefficient solutions, of those governments that give sparingly to the little men, and that give generously to the big men, of those governments that force the older citizens to beg at the provincial welfare offices, and to beg day after day for a small allowance.

• (2300)

[English]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There was an understanding, not the kind that is signed, sealed and delivered, but a kind of understanding that this debate would not go beyond eleven o'clock. I wonder whether there could not now be a formal understanding that the question be put at 11.15. I am prepared to sit all night to get this bill through, but—

An hon. Member: We should vote before twelve.

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, we are still keeping to the agreement reached by the representatives of the four parties. As to us, we would like one of our colleagues to have the floor for five minutes. I know that the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) has expressed his desire to speak; consequently, I suggest that around 11.15 or 11.20 the question could be put.

Mr. Speaker: The suggestion made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is to the effect that the House agree to a definite time.