

Canada Pension Plan

I see that under our special rule my time is just about up and I will not transgress. I want to say again that I think that in the history of social legislation in this country the step we are now taking is an exceedingly important one. We are recognizing the fact that if old age security should be paid without a means test it should be paid at 65 as well as at age 70, and this parliament will have it to its credit that it enacted this legislation. I say again, and I will have an opportunity to repeat it when we get back on the Canada pension plan itself, that I think the total package of a two stage kind of plan, an earnings related and an old age security plan, is a good one for Canadians and as the years go by it will turn out to have been a well designed plan. But I think the principal gap in it all is the failure to do anything for the people now over 70 and the failure to cover certain other groups. This can be done by increasing old age security itself to \$100 a month. The minister says there are other ways to do it. She says that the opposition members point out the gaps but come up with a simple solution. This has been the answer, Mr. Chairman, every time we have proposed increases. I remember the days when we used to advocate removal of the means test at age 70. I sat in the house and heard Liberals across the way say: "What. You mean you are going to pay a pension to millionaires without a means test?" But we found that was the way to do it, and let the income tax take care of the millionaires.

I suggest that the best way to cover the needs of those now over 70, the best way to cover the needs of those between 65 and 70, the best way to cover the needs of those who will not be earning enough to build up an adequate pension for themselves under the Canada pension plan, is to improve the amount of the pension under old age security itself. I regret that the rules stand in the way of our moving an amendment to make the eligible age of 65 effective right away. We think this is what ought to be done. We also think that along with this when we get into the bill the house should give the government the chance to make this very good bill a perfect piece of legislation by including in it old age security of \$100 a month payable forthwith at age 65.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, everyone is vitally concerned and interested in the measure now before the house. We have followed with a great deal of interest the debates that have already taken place on this measure.

They have been very complex and involved and personally I have not taken very much part in the discussion so far. But as we now have before us part IV, the amendments to the Old Age Security Act, it stimulates within us a sense of responsibility because we recognize the claim that these senior citizens of the country have upon us in regard to their welfare, the standard of living they now enjoy and the standard they should enjoy in the days that lie ahead.

There have been many expressions of opinion regarding the advisability of tying in this particular section with the Canada pension plan. Reference has been made today and on other occasions to the fact that what we have before us is a package plan in that the earnings related section coupled with old age security will give Canadians a moderately adequate income in their declining years. On the other side of the question there are many who believe there should have been a separation of the earnings related phase of the pension plan and the old age security provisions. I believe that would have been much wiser and would have solved many of the problems. It would have made the measure much less complicated and involved and on the other hand it would have provided in a very adequate way for the discharge of our social responsibilities in these two fields.

We have a measure before us with a proposal to reduce the age on a graduated basis from age 70 to age 65. This is all to the good and we support this particular proposal fully. We have felt for a number of years that this was desirable and have advanced arguments in favour of it. We know the government at this time, in introducing this particular amendment, will make old age security available at age 65. We would agree that there should have been an increase as well in the pension payable. I think it was back about 1958 that we made the suggestion old age pensioners should receive a pension of \$100 per month. I remember very well how we were ridiculed at that time and many people thought we had gone far beyond that which was legitimate, desirable or possible. It may be that we were a little bit ahead of our time, but we are very glad there are those today who are supporting the idea there should be a basic pension of \$100 for our senior citizens.

Now, we know very well that the government is not going to consider it at this time. We know there is not going to be any basic change in the proposals that have been laid out in this particular measure. I suppose