

tired of waiting and the time has long since passed when the government can avoid making a decision.

The senior citizens in this country will never be able to make ends meet until such time as the government comes to grips with this cancer. How can they relax in the evening of their days when they see their only hope of justice in the form of a rail strike to bring the government back to a point of temporary sanity?

Before my time runs out I should like to make one more point with regard to the government's responsibility in this matter. The case has been made over and over again that the government has failed to measure up to its responsibility in fighting inflation. Now that is a fact of our daily lives.

However, there is another area in which the government has failed in its duty to the electorate. This government has doubled the national budget in the last five years over what it had become in the previous hundred years. When the present Prime Minister took office the national budget was about \$10 billion. In the coming fiscal year it is just short of \$20 billion. I charge this government with doing more than anyone or anything else to contribute to the present spiral in the rate of increase in inflation. It is obvious from the estimates that it does not have any intention of reducing expenditures, or of even trying to hold the line.

The villain in this piece is not the labour unions, or industry, or the wholesalers and retailers in our country. The culprit is not some person or thing outside the country, as we have also been led to believe. The villain in this shabby drama sits there across the room, smug and complacent and determined not to take suggestions or advice from anyone who seriously wants to restore the buying power of the Canadian dollar.

We have already been warned by the garment industry that clothing in Canada will probably increase in price by as much as 50 per cent in the next six months, and possibly sooner. Industry knows or suspects that this is going to happen, but the government appears to be completely unaware of this fact or is completely disinterested. There are signs that food and shelter are also going to experience dramatic price increases in that period but still we have had no indication that the government is aware or interested.

We cannot wait for several more months for these things to happen, Mr. Chairman. We must take some sort of initiative now. I call upon the government to stop worrying about the NDP support and begin to act like a government. If the government table legislation that is designed to grapple with national problems, they can forget about the NDP; we have already demonstrated that point. They will not need them, for the simple reason that we will give them the support they need. But the government will have to start acting responsibly, and this could prove refreshing as well as fruitful for the electorate after months of playing games. At least in my opinion it would be worth a try.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a word or two. It might be more than a word or two but it will be about clause 1.

Mr. Lalonde: Hear, hear! You are the first one.

Old Age Security

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): If my tone of voice seemed to suggest that some of the speeches made recently have been out of order, that is what I meant. It seems to me that the time comes when Standing Order 55(2) should be applied, as indeed Your Honour tried to apply it a few moments ago.

I should like to talk about the language of this bill, some examples of which are to be found in clause 1. I know that the law has to be clearly written so that every loophole is covered and no smart lawyer can get around it. But I also believe that the law is written for the people, and it seems to me that a law that provides a pension for senior citizens ought to be written in such a way that an average senior citizen can pick it up and know what it means.

I am not sure that all of the 264 members on the floor of this House can pick up this piece of legislation and know precisely what it means, except, of course, that they have read about it in the newspapers. Let us take clause 1. Part of what I say refers to clause 2 as well, but I will make my remarks in relation to clause 1. In the main, clause 1 of the bill tries to tell us that the consumer price index will be used for the purpose of the quarterly escalation of the Old Age Security Pension and the payment of the Guaranteed Income Supplement. In order to do that it tells us in the paragraph on page 1 what is meant by the consumer price index and makes reference to the adjustment quarter. Then we discover that there can be two kinds of adjustment quarter, the first adjustment quarter and a second adjustment quarter, and that there can also be a payment quarter.

• (2040)

Having given us that information, the clause proceeds to define these various concepts. In order to define the first adjustment quarter, it uses four full subparagraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d). They define what the first adjustment quarter is in relation to each of the four different months in the calendar year in which the escalation is to take place. Then, not in any logical sequence, but I suppose because of the alphabet, we are given a definition of payment quarter. I would have thought that we would be given the definition of the first adjustment quarter, then of the second adjustment quarter, and then of the payment quarter; but no, we get the definition of the first adjustment quarter, then of the payment quarter, and then of the second adjustment quarter.

For the purpose of defining the second adjustment quarter, the bill again has to use not one or two simple sentences, but four subparagraphs, (a), (b), (c) and (d). After that we are told, as we read on in the bill, that payments shall be adjusted quarterly. And just in case enough has not been put into the bill, we find this phrase, "in such manner as may be prescribed by regulation . . .".

Having read all that, we then come to a clause or two that tell us how much a pensioner will get under the provisions of this bill in various quarters. Up to this point I have just been describing in my own words what the various clauses do. But having looked over the first three or four pages of the bill, I find that there is a honey of a clause that starts at the bottom of page 3 and continues over on page 4. I should like to read it into the record. It is