

the Government's bad humour over its incapability to run the country in a logical and sensible fashion is getting to be almost more than a person can stand.

I would like to deal with the subject of closure. The Parliamentary Secretary wishes to indulge in semantics by saying that this motion does not constitute closure but simply stops debate. It is interesting to look back and see the opinion that was held in what might be said the olden days, before we had the likes of this Government. I was reading an old *Hansard* dated May 21, 1956. The debate at that time concerned the northern Ontario pipeline. Mr. George Drew was speaking. He said, as reported at page 4160 of *Hansard*:

There has never been a similar application of closure in this Parliament or at Westminster. On the first occasion when closure was applied here the bill was introduced on December 5, 1912, and closure was applied on April 10, 1913.

That is four months later. That is how the Canadian Parliament functioned for a long time. The House was given a very reasonable amount of time before the Government swung the axe of closure on a debate.

This is no longer the case. The Government announces closure ahead of time. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) announced closure when he did not even intend to use it. I suspect the reason why the Government rushes into closure motions now is that it becomes a habit-forming.

I would like to quote from an old *Hansard* once again. On May 29, 1956, as reported at page 4422, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker said:

Yesterday the Prime Minister, endeavoured once more, by a technique so crude as to be transparent, to return out of the kindness of his heart a portion of the rights of parliament. The Prime Minister has always been a great student of history. One has to go back to the days of James or Charles in order to see similar conduct, conduct which was generally believed to have ended for all time; but that spirit of tyranny came back during the days of John Wilkes in the mid-eighteenth century. It is, therefore, interesting to read that in 1621 parliament, then dominated by the sovereign, not by the sovereign's chief minister, asked that something be done to restore freedom to parliament, and that at that time this was said:

—in the handling . . . of those businesses every Member of the house hath, and of right ought to have, freedom of speech to Profound, treat, reason, and bring to conclusion the same.

However, we do not have that freedom or right any longer. We do have the right to come here and debate for two or three days a vicious Bill such as this which cuts the standard of living enjoyed by old age pensioners in this country.

I listened very carefully to the speech given by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin). I would like to give her notice now that I will have a question for her during third reading about her statement on how this Bill will not hurt those people on the Guaranteed Income Supplement, even if that GIS payment is as small as \$2 a month. While I do not have the exact figures, let us use the figure of \$250 a month for old age pension, and \$250 for the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Let us say, for example, that someone had a private pension of \$248 a month and the old age pension. Those pensions combined would total \$498 a month. That person would then need a \$2 Guaranteed Income Supplement. According to the Minister's remarks today, does this mean that the pensioner will get indexation from then on of his or

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her old age pension, plus full indexation of his private pension, plus whatever it takes to get him to the limit of the minimum income? I hope the Minister will be able to clarify that for us tomorrow because many people in my constituency are worried about it.

I might say that I have the honour to represent a wonderful group of people in my constituency, of whom 23,295 are old age pensioners. A great majority of these pensioners are women. There are 6,385 widows in my constituency of Victoria. These pensioners do not understand what the Government is doing. They are scared to death of what they hear the Government is doing. Frankly, I would appreciate it if someone on the Government side would tell us if the Government will even allow pensioners to live at a standard of living which is 5 per cent lower than it would have been, had this Bill not been introduced. The result of this legislation is that people will have to lower their standard of living this year by 5 per cent.

I would like to quote from a letter which I received. I am glad to be able to read it into the record because this gentleman misunderstood the Government's intention, as one easily can with a Government like this. In his letter, dated October 14, 1982, he said:

I have heard over the radio that the Government may not be able to continue payment of Old Age Pensions and if this happens I will be in deep trouble.

My wife Kathleen has been in Central Care Home, 844 Johnson Street, Victoria, B.C. nearly three years now and I use her pension and my own to pay for her care. We are both over 80 years of age.

He continues his letter, but I think you can understand from that that the people who write to me are worried. That letter is from Mr. John P. Wyseman of Stafford Street in my constituency.

I just cannot understand why the Government is proposing this legislation at this time. I am sure Members on all sides are pleased that inflation is going down. Surely it will not be long before we experience 6 per cent to 7 per cent inflation. Why scare the people? Why go after the people the way in which the Government is doing? It is really beyond me. Why not wait a few months, perhaps with a six month hoist, and if the promises of lower inflation that are given on the financial pages these days are true and if the United States gets down to their target area of 2 per cent or 3 per cent inflation, the Bill would not be necessary. We could then continue to do what is right and fitting, which is, to treat our senior citizens with the dignity and generosity for which Canada is noted. Instead of that, we seem to be seized with the idea of hurting the most defenseless people in our society. I wish that it would stop.

• (1630)

**Mr. Jim Peterson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology):** Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us deals with our senior citizens. The Hon. Member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon) has indicated to us that many senior citizens are apprehensive concerning the intentions of our Government