

*Income Tax Act*

motion such as the motion put forward by my colleague, and sometimes I must say, whether we are on the opposition or Government benches, it may be a little difficult. However, the fact is that we put our names to what is said in this Chamber and it is recorded. It is recorded not only for the bureaucrats in the bowels of the Department of Finance, but it is also recorded for people back home who we represent.

When we are asked to debate and give our comments, we have to bear in mind that our primary responsibility in this Chamber is to represent the people who sent us here. We represent them whether we do it in committee, in debate or in Private Members' hour. We are prepared as elected representatives from all Parties, to go back home and support what is said. I would hope, therefore, that somewhere some bureaucrat who is doing this long detailed study of this particular matter, will take to heart what I have just said because I intend to put it in writing.

Having said that, I want to address myself to the substance of my colleague's motion. The Guaranteed Income Supplement was introduced some years ago in 1967, I believe, and it was an effort on behalf of the Government of the day—and I am sure would be supported by all colleagues in the House now—to redress the situation where old age pensioners live below the poverty line and/or that is all the income they have for subsistence purposes. In other words, they do not have enough income to meet their basic needs, they cannot get by on their old age pensions. We, therefore, introduced the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and when that was combined with the Canada Pension Plan, the idea was that the senior citizens of our country would have adequate provision for themselves.

It is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that in many cases—I believe I heard the figure of 39,000 used in reference to workmen's compensation payments—senior citizens cannot get by on the old age pension and the Canada Pension so we have the Guaranteed Income Supplement which, let us just say, works.

My office, as I am sure are the offices of my colleagues in the Chamber, is besieged in the months from January through to April and May with requests from people for advice on their Guaranteed Income Supplement. I am not fully conversant with the form but my staff in both my Orillia and Midland offices help these people to complete the forms. However there is a gap, Mr. Speaker, which could be addressed on the basis of workmen's compensation.

● (1750)

However, the most interesting gap is the one which exists in the year they turn 65, in, let us say, April or May. They would qualify if they could submit a Guaranteed Income Supplement form but they cannot do so until the following January. I suggest that is something which can be looked at. If a person qualifies in April because they do not have enough income, I do not see why they should have to wait until the following January when the forms come out to make their application for the GIS. The fact remains that the GIS is based on income. That has advantages and disadvantages. It minimizes the Government's involvement in an individual's financial

affairs, but at the same time allows for a verification of income. However, there are some deductions which reduce the net income, such as contributions to an RRSP.

I think we all agree that if a person is making contributions to an RRSP, they can hardly be in a position to qualify for the GIS. There are also some forms of income which are excluded, such as war service compensation, income earned by Indians on reserves, and certain other pensions. I think we have to address ourselves, and I would ask those bureaucrats in the bowels of the Ministry of Finance to do so as well, to how compensation for injuries suffered on the job is different from those types of pensions. I am sure I speak for all of us when I say that workmen's compensation legislation does the job. Maybe it does not do the job as nicely or to the extent we all want to see, but there is no question that it benefits the people who work for a living should they have an injury. As my colleague from Oxford said, we cannot put the leg or the arm back on but we as a society can say we are going to do our best to compensate the people concerned. For that reason I have considerable sympathy for the motion my colleague has put forward.

This is a question we all have to examine very carefully. Should this type of income be included in calculating income for purposes of the GIS? I do not think it should. I really do not. These compensation payments are an effort by society to compensate someone who has made a contribution to society during their working life, someone who is paying income tax, unemployment insurance and otherwise supporting the system. When that person suffers an injury then society has to make an effort to put them back in the same position they were in before the injury. We sort of give it with one hand through the compensation payment and take it away with the limit on the GIS. I am not really sure that would be seen as fair by any political Party or any elected representative, so when we examine the GIS limit and the definition, we should consider ways to eliminate hardships brought about by previous amendments.

My colleague across the way knows it is not always easy to be a member of the Government and do things that one cannot support. However, it is part of the game because of the solidarity required in Government. It does not happen every day but it does happen and I know that it happened to my colleague from Cape Breton-East Richmond. I know he fought his battle in caucus. I am not sure he fought it on the floor of the House, that may not have been appropriate, but I am sure, knowing how effective he is as a member of his Party—I do not want to go any further than that for fear it goes to his head and that would be the part of my speech that he did send home—when he did fight it as a member of the Government, he did so with conviction. I can understand some of his reasons. He said that the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour both support this change. He mentioned the United Mine Workers and senior citizen groups. I can understand their support.

He made the comment that we all have to speak our mind in this Chamber and represent our people. I know I have had