

Old Age Security Act Amendment

● (8:50 p.m.)

advised. This government has been the author of escalating costs all along the line. Yet, when finally crowded into a corner and convinced by political parties in opposition that something must be done for the aged people of our country, for those who during their lifetimes have helped to build this land, they come up with a hodge-podge of bureaucratic red tape which is more of a deterrent than a help in the face of the high cost of living which now besets senior citizens.

I pointed out that the old people of Canada have built this country. This statement is more true of them than it will ever be of any following generation. During their working years they did not have at their disposal the advantages of modern technocracy, the latest inventions and all our modern labour saving devices, to say nothing of automation. Every one of them worked a six-day week and at least a ten-hour day, and the farmers worked much longer than that, from sunrise to sunset for low wages, and low returns. Those who were not farmers or farm workers but lived in the towns and villages could not make high wage demands when seeking employment. They belonged to no unions. All they asked for was work. And they willingly went to work for the going wages. They lacked the educational advantages and qualifications with which the modern generation is equipped. All they had was the will to work, good common sense for the most part, and an understanding of simple economics which told them they must not spend more than they earned. The first requisite was to pay the rent and the store bills. There was nothing much left over for luxuries.

These people are still existing without any luxuries. I know many of them in my constituency who are facing the twilight of their lives and the westering sun of life eking out their existence on a bare minimum. Time was, in their youth, when they could afford to buy a new suit or a new dress once in a while, but not now at this stage of life. They cannot afford these things. I see some of them on the street in Napanee. If the weather is fine they walk downtown from their lodgings, their clothes mostly threadbare and shabby. Some of them have a little money put away, perhaps enough for their funerals. As for other revenue they wait for next month's old age pension cheque. If they are in institutions they see only a little spending money, probably not more than \$10 a month.

I checked the other day with a good nursing home in Napanee which takes care of senior citizens. I asked what was the daily cost of keeping a person in that home. The figure given me was \$7 a day. This means that the monthly keep of any person living in an institution of this kind would cost at least \$200.

Assuming there are 31 days in the month, it comes out to an even greater amount. You can see, therefore, that \$75 a month does not even begin to keep a pensioner in a nursing home. Of course, if the pensioner, apart from his pension, is an indigent, the balance of the money is paid by the public welfare department of his municipality. I am sure all hon. members agree that \$75 is a mere pittance. According to modern day costs, the \$30 maximum supplement, although a help to those who will receive it, is still a mere pittance because of the recent rapid escalation in the cost of living all along the line.

So, Mr. Speaker, you must agree that this bill does very little for the welfare and social security of the old age pensioners of Canada. This Liberal government pays lip service to many things. From them we have often heard lofty platitudes about social planning, welfare and security measures, citizenship and human rights—words, words and more words. Here in Bill C-251, however, they really display their inhuman and callous disregard for more than 5 per cent of the people of Canada, the poor and helpless senior citizens of the country. No, they do not care much about the poor and aged. They are playing for bigger stakes.

On May 27 last, as reported at page 5609 of *Hansard*, I pointed out to the house that this government and its policies apparently serve the big interests and the super corporations. Now the findings of the Senate-Commons committee investigating living costs confirm my statements of May 27 which sparked this inquiry. I should like to quote from the *Ottawa Journal* of Thursday, December 8, 1966:

The stunning scope of the Weston-Loblaw food empire was unfolded for all to see today in a full disclosure of the names of its 150 active companies.

The extent of the great North American complex was made known simultaneously to shareholders and to the Senate-Commons committee investigating living costs.

No doubt there are other cartels which prey upon the frayed purse-strings of the Canadian public, especially the old people. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, can we bolster up any humanitarianism which may exist in this government at this late hour? I doubt it very much.