

Old Age Security Act

when someone from our party is speaking, about the failure of the government headed by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) to do anything about increasing pensions for our senior citizens.

I have before me a résumé of pension increases since pensions were introduced in 1952. It shows that from 1952 to 1957 a Liberal government raised the pension from \$40 to \$46. In 1957 it was immediately raised to \$55 a month when the new government came into power. Five years later, in 1963, it was raised to \$75. From 1967 to 1972 the basic pension was increased to \$75, and then to a grand total of \$80. So we can see that the generosity of the party the hon. member represents is not very great.

We recognize that some of the changes contained in Bill C-207 are quite useful. The idea of bringing in an escalator clause is good, but I am not convinced that the way it is set up will accomplish what is intended. I hope that when we have before us the regulations in this regard the matter will be clarified.

I conclude by saying that our senior citizens have been responsible for building this nation to the state in which it is today. In many parts of our country the senior citizens arrived in wilderness areas as pioneers. Through their efforts, physical, emotional and otherwise, they converted the wilderness into beautiful, productive country. Many of them were able to save sufficient funds to be comfortable in their old age. However, many were unable to do so, and it is in respect of this group that I emphasize the country owes them a decent living in repayment of their contribution to the conversion of what was wilderness into a beautiful, developed country.

I note the minister has left the House. He probably found my remarks boring. However, I plead with him to seriously consider the two suggestions I have made and urge that he endeavour to bring in appropriate amendments to the bill before it is passed by the House.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I shall not detain the House long because we want to get this bill through the House today. It will go to the committee, where I hope it will be dealt with very quickly. I join my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who in commenting on the bill referred to the sheer cynicism which is evidenced by bringing it forward at this time. I also join my colleagues on this side of the House who have made brilliant speeches and have adequately dealt with the bill.

I stress the difficulty we experience in respect of legislation of this kind in attempting to meet our commitments. This measure has been subjected to amending motions by our party and by my friends to the left. These amendments have been voted against time and time again by hon. members opposite. Now we are confronted with the legislation, under these circumstances, because of sheer political banditry. It is precisely the same as the other circumstance I raised today about these issues being parallel.

While being interviewed on January 9, 1972, by Mr. Peter Desbarats, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was asked about a number of bills which I believe included this bill, and also about election expenses. I put this

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

matter to the House because the principle is precisely the same. At that time the Prime Minister said:

Well, quite candidly, one is a question of time. We did tackle this problem along with many others. We didn't bring it to the point where we could introduce legislation in time for the next election, which would have had to be many months ago in order that the old election machinery and the electoral officers and so on be able to readjust to whatever new laws we . . . So, it's something we would have had to do, you know, a year ago to become effective.

Later in the interview the Prime Minister said:

We have a very good report by Hyliard Chappell which came out a few months ago, it came out too late to be passed through Parliament in time to be effective for this present election.

But yesterday, on this note, the Prime Minister said:

—this very morning in cabinet we approved a bill doing exactly those things—limiting campaign expenditures and having the state pay at least part of the bill of election expenses . . . so I consulted Don Macdonald and we decided to blow it tonight.

The bill is to be introduced on Tuesday. Under these conditions it is very difficult for this party and the opposition in general to conform with the view of the government with regard to the legislation which is to be introduced. I mention this matter in the hope that it might be an object lesson to my friends opposite, so that when they come to the serious problem of introducing legislation to this House they will do so having in mind the needs of the country rather than political cynicism.

Hon. P. M. Mahoney (Minister of State): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be even more brief. In view of the credit just claimed by the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) for the Conservative government's \$10 per month increases in the old age security pension in 1962 and 1963, I think we should all regard with a great deal of seriousness the allegations of political cynicism emanating from the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

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• (1540)

PENSION ACT, WAR VETERANS ALLOWANCE ACT AND OTHER ACTS

AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE FOR ANNUAL ADJUSTMENT OF PENSIONS AND ALLOWANCES

Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Veterans Affairs) moved that Bill C-208, to amend the Pension Act, the War Veterans Allowance Act, the Civilian War Pensions and Allowance Act, the Children of War Dead (Education Assistance) Act and the Department of Veterans Affairs Act, to provide for the annual adjustment of pensions and allowances payable thereunder, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.