

Time Allocation

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that we in this party believe that we cannot tamper with the pensions of senior citizens.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: I want to say to the Conservative Members that all the bleating which we are hearing today is quite inconsistent with yesterday's statement by the Conservative House Leader, who said he was quite prepared to deal with the Bill and let it go through. I do not quite understand why, all of a sudden, the Conservatives are pretending to be opposed to the measure introduced by the Minister. There is no question in my mind but that the support of the Conservative Party for the six and five program is absolute. They quite well understood, when six and five was brought in, that it would affect pensioners, as it would affect many other people in society. Suddenly to pretend to be opposed to it because there would be some political gain is a disgusting manoeuvre which should in no way be allowed to occur in that Party.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deans: There is no way the Government can justify moving to limit the debate on this particular piece of legislation today. This legislation goes to the very heart of the social welfare programs that we in this country have long supported. It goes to the very root of the incomes of senior citizens, regardless of where they live in the country and regardless of what their ability is to meet their financial obligations. There are hundreds of thousands of senior citizens in this country for whom any reduction in their income, considering the increase in inflation, will prove to be disastrous.

● (1530)

Yesterday when I spoke I said we were not only opposed to this Bill but we were opposed to any reduction of any kind. Not one single penny, not one red cent, should be taken from senior citizens in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: They were the people who came through the depression when there were virtually no pension programs. They are the people on whose backs this country was built. It is to them that we turn with pride when we look at the accomplishments that we have made in this country. All of a sudden we are asking them—no, we are not even asking them, we are telling them that inflation brought about in part by this Government's mis-spending has to be fought by senior citizens' incomes being reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you yourself do not agree with this measure and I know that there must be, somewhere in the Liberal benches, others who care about the impact of what is happening here today. I know that there must be some on the Liberal benches who have an understanding of what this measure will mean. Not only does it mean a reduction in purchasing power for senior citizens in 1983 and in 1984, but it means for every single year of their life from today on they

will have less income to spend than they would have had and their income will constantly be behind the rate of inflation. It means that we have accepted in principle that senior citizens are not to be given incomes that even begin to meet the requirements exacted by an economy that does not show pity for those who do not have an independent source of wealth.

I say through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister, withdraw this Bill. Withdraw this action today; withdraw this Bill.

The Minister stands up and with tears in her eyes tells us that it is a small amount that she is asking senior citizens to give up, and it does not really amount to a lot of money. If it is such a small amount, why the hell does the Government need it? If it is such a small amount, surely the Government can find other sources of income in order to guarantee that these seniors will not be asked to make this contribution. My goodness gracious, we are looking for something like \$30 million to \$60 million over the period of time that this measure will be in place.

Is the Government saying that we cannot find that amount of money within the waste that currently goes on in various and many Government ministries? Is the Government saying that the information program of the Government is more valuable than meeting our commitment to senior citizens, so that they can have a decent income? Is the Government saying that the appointment of another 15 Senators is more important than allocating that money to meet our commitment to senior citizens' incomes? Is the Government suggesting that bailing out Dome Petroleum is more important than meeting the commitment to our senior citizens?

Is the Government suggesting that these small amounts that the Minister speaks about are more appropriately carried by senior citizens whose incomes are already inadequate, rather than carried by those whose incomes are far more than they need? Is the Government suggesting that it could not reasonably have asked those in the upper 10 per cent of the income earners of this country to carry some of the additional burden, so that it did not have to take this action? Surely to God this is not what the Government is saying.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is in my judgment one of the worst pieces of legislation I have seen since I entered the House of Commons. It stands alongside the worst legislation I have seen in 16 years of politics. It is completely against all the things that I believe, and that I believe that the Liberal Party believe, with regard to social justice.

I put to you, sir, that not only are we opposed to it, not only do we intend to vote against it, not only do we think that bringing it to a vote is inappropriate and wrong, but we think this Bill should be delayed by whatever means is available to every Member of this House to guarantee that the Bill never passes; and that is what we intend to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to get