

Old Age Security Act Amendment

needs of the older citizens of our country. The legislation which he has brought forth will provide assistance where needed and still maintain the dignity of the individual. This kind of enlightened social security measure has been so much a part of the legislative program of the present administration. I am proud, therefore, to support this measure introduced by the party that has been the author of every single major piece of social security legislation that has been placed on the statute books of our country.

Mr. Jack A. Irvine (London): Mr. Speaker, it was not my intention to enter this debate, but because of rather extenuating circumstances and reports I have received recently from throughout my riding, upon which I shall enlarge in a few moments, I feel that I must take part in the discussion. I should say at once that I am prepared to vote in favour of this bill. I do not want to, in one way, but I have to on the premise that half a loaf is better than no bread.

It is my understanding that this supplement to old age security will provide a maximum of \$105 per month or \$1,260 a year. The old age security payment is, as I understand it, to remain at the same figure of \$75 a month for all, but the supplement will, on a test basis, bring it up to a total of \$105 per month for those people who have inadequate means.

The word "test" has been explained in many different ways; therefore, I shall refer to it, at least momentarily, as just a test. In the case of a person who has no income other than the \$75 a month, I understand he could draw an additional \$30 a month; but for every \$2 that he earns, \$1 will be deducted from the \$30 supplement. Let us consider a few cases. There are people who, through sickness or no fault of their own, find themselves existing on the old age security payment only. Such a couple would receive, under the present regulations, \$150 a month. If this bill passes, they will also be entitled to the supplement. But let us suppose these people have a little initiative and own their own home. They may rent a portion of it to a friend for, say, \$60 or \$70 a month. Then, surely this is income which should be reported. If it is not reported, this income will be "snooped out", as one hon. member mentioned. I find it rather difficult to understand the fairness of this program when applied to such people.

The minister made a statement concerning people who were against this measure. I think perhaps he did not mean what he said because I do not think he is the kind of person who

would take away the initiative of these people. If their initiative is taken away, we will shatter their individual enterprise. We must remember that many people in these circumstances like to do something for themselves. Let us consider, for instance, the case of a man who has no income other than the \$105 a month. For the sake of argument, let us say he is 68 years of age. He will receive an income of \$1,260 a year, including the supplement. As I understand it, this man will have to pay \$22 tax on that income, because \$160 of that income will be subject to income tax. I do not think this is fair. I believe the minister would want to take a good look at this matter. I think that perhaps when we review the things we think we know, we begin to realize the things we thought we knew.

Let us consider for a moment the case of a man whom I know very well. This man worked hard all his life. Fifteen or 18 years ago he was in fairly good financial circumstances. He worked for a firm that provided no pension plan, because at that time pension plans were not as popular as they are today. This family was comfortably well off. However, his wife was very ill for a few years before she died. In that period of time, he spent many thousands of dollars in an effort to cure her sickness. I know whereof I speak, because last year I spent \$10,000 in nurses' fees for my wife. I called on this man. He did not ask me to call on him; he was not the kind of person that would want you to call on him. However, one of his friends said he thought this person was having a difficult time, and I went to his home. This man is now just past 70 years of age, and is trying to exist on only \$75 per month.

I went to the city of London and made arrangements for a little extra money to be provided to him in order that he might live in some semblance of decency. This man had an ordinary room in which he had a bed and a few other things from his home of sentimental value, including a television set which was almost beyond repair.

● (5:50 p.m.)

He paid \$50 a month for the rental of this room. He told me that he set aside \$20 every month to pay for his food. I am sure that with the spiralling cost of food items he did not have much in the way of a steak to place upon that meagre little table of his, and the remaining \$5 was spent on his clothes, his smokes and his entertainment. I contend that on this basis this man could have very little in the