

Old Age Security Act Amendment

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If it is the wish of the house, I am prepared to make a ruling on the admissibility of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the motion that Bill No. C-251 be now read a third time, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre moved:

That Bill C-251 be now read a third time, but that it be referred back to the committee of the whole house for the purpose of reconsidering the income test provided in clause 3 thereof.

In considering amendments to a bill on third reading three considerations at least must be taken into account. First, does the amendment offend against the resolution preceding the money bill? Second, does the amendment contradict the principle agreed to when the bill was adopted on second reading? Third, does the amendment include matters that are not contained within the bill itself?

There can be no doubt about the intent of the amendment now before the house. If it were to have any real and practical effect it would indeed offend against the resolution which preceded the bill, it would be contrary to the principle adopted on second reading, and it would introduce a matter different from that contained in the bill. But the Chair is concerned too about the wording of the amendment. First, the amendment recommits the bill to the committee of the whole. It is not out of order to recommit a bill. May I read citation 415 of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, fourth edition, paragraph (2), page 287:

Bills may be recommitted a number of times with or without limitation;—

Having considered the fact that a bill may be recommitted. I would say to the house that, whatever the intent of the amendment may be, the purpose as expressed in the amendment is to "reconsider" the income test provided in clause 3. To reconsider a bill in committee of the whole may not be out of order under certain circumstances, although in this particular case I would have very grave doubts that any practical change could result from such reconsideration.

However, in view of the wording of the amendment and having weighed in my own mind both sides of the question, I propose to rule the amendment in order, and I do so now.

stand up in this house and suggest that the statement made by the leader of my party regarding the bill now before us has no basis in foundation or logic. If the minister wishes to follow the concept of old age security on a universal basis without a means test as established by the committee in 1951, let him stand up in this house and say so. Let him not waffle around with the meagre provisions of the bill he has brought in.

As to the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, it should be apparent not only from its terms but from what the hon. member said when introducing it that this is the central issue on which he is seeking to focus the attention of the house at this time. We all know that the substance of this amendment if carried would in effect increase the universal old age pension, without a means test, from \$75 a month to \$105 a month.

Mr. Langlois (Chicoutimi): Where would you get the \$100 million more?

Mr. Barnett: We can argue about what is an appropriate level but the fact that the amendment has been proposed from this quarter of the house indicates that we believe this would be an appropriate level. If the minister wants to think we are turning and twisting in this respect, I suggest that he look at his own face in the mirror and decide who is doing that, because we are standing foursquare behind the amendment and the basic concept now in the Old Age Security Act.

We say that this basic concept should be maintained and enhanced because it is necessary in this country in the foreseeable future. This is the issue involved in the amendment. This is why we are asking support from hon. members in all parts of the house. The house by its vote can give clear instruction to the government on its desires and wishes. We would expect that even this government would then act upon the clearcut view expressed by parliament assembled, as we now are, with the Speaker in the chair.

One can brush aside the specious and narrow procedural argument advanced by the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson). If the members of his party are interested in the welfare of the older people of this country, as he said they were, they would support this amendment. I am sure the hon. member for Medicine Hat would agree with me. I have cleared up the procedural misconception that he obviously had when he spoke earlier.