

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

• (1120)

Second, the seniors will not suffer as a result of the cut. I have never said anything like that. When you take money away from people, especially when it is \$18 this year and \$39 next year, it is a small sacrifice. I have always acknowledged it. I do not know what the Hon. Member is referring to. In the last seven months the rate of inflation compounded has dropped to 7.2 per cent. We are only giving 6 per cent. There is a little something missing. I have acknowledged that. I thank seniors for their sacrifice.

[Translation]

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister. On December 14 last year, the Minister told the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, and I quote:

The net savings for 1983 are \$32 million and for 1984 \$52 million, and this shows that people will not suffer because otherwise we would have had considerable savings.

[English]

At the beginning of the Minister's remarks, she leaped at the Opposition and said that we had been using a figure of \$84 million, that we were lying to the nation and implied that Members were lying. These are her words of six weeks ago that the Opposition has been using. How does she explain that? Can she answer another question? I would like to know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. The Chair does not want to make a ruling out of my comment at this moment. I notice that the previous Member bicycled two questions together. I know, too, that the intention of the Committee was that questions should be short and sharp. I will gladly recognize the Hon. Member for his supplementary. The House may be better served by not bringing in two, three or four questions in one operation.

[Translation]

Miss Bégin: I shall try to answer the Hon. Member very briefly so as to give as many Members as possible a chance to ask questions. The reason for the disparity between the figures quoted by the Hon. Member is that inflation is going down from month to month. When I appeared before the Committee in the first half of December, I gave the figures for that period. Now, almost two months later, I am giving the revised figures which are available to all Members from the Department of Finance and which demonstrate the success of our program. As a result, senior citizens with other sources of income will lose only \$18 in 1983 and \$39 in 1984 on their indexing.

[English]

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, the Minister's attack on the Opposition dishonours her office, as the figures came from her six weeks ago. To accuse us of using seven-month old figures is just not right, when the health and welfare of senior citizens is at stake. I would like to know from the Minister's own lips whether in Cabinet, as these decisions were made, she fought for the senior citizens and the retention of their indexing and

lost. Did she fight for them or did she volunteer the senior citizens and their income as the front-line troops in the fight against inflation? The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) got a bigger budget. In all her major portfolios, the Minister of National Health and Welfare took a cut on behalf of the poorer people of this nation, including the pensioners. Did she fight and lose, or did she volunteer these people to make the sacrifice?

[Translation]

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to make it clear to the Hon. Member that when I was talking about seven-month-old figures and figures that had not been checked, I was specifically referring to the New Democratic Party which has not been checking its figures in this area. Therefore, the Hon. Member should not feel that he is under attack. Furthermore, the Hon. Member knows perfectly well that I am not going to answer his question because proceedings of Cabinet meetings cannot be disclosed.

[English]

The Hon. Member is playing a game. It is for Canadians to judge whether I usually do well as their privileged voice in Cabinet. What else can I say? I do not have a clue where the media gets this information. However, the media usually says that I am a winner on my programs. What else can I say? My interest is to have the best for seniors. Fighting inflation is the best for seniors.

• (1125)

Mr. Hawkes: Is the Minister implying that she is a winner in this case because Cabinet wanted to cut even more?

Miss Bégin: The Hon. Member will not succeed in making me say what happens in Cabinet, that is forbidden. I took an oath of office and I will respect it. Our purpose is to do the best for Canadians and seniors, and we are doing it.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, there are several anomalies which this Bill is bringing about, and they are of some concern to me. We covered my concern about people on private pensions combined with old age pensions who will suffer, the other day. I expect the Minister will be willing to tell us whether they are going to have a rather automatic adjustment to the size of their Guaranteed Income Supplement to bring them up to the standard level which they would be getting if they had no private pension and were getting the Guaranteed Income Supplement, plus the Old Age Security.

I would like to ask the Minister about the Canada Pension Plan. A person is deprived of the Guaranteed Income Supplement if they get a pension under the Canada Pension Plan which puts them over the figure of around \$503 or \$504 in total. If the Canada Pension Plan puts them over that line and they cannot get the GIS, it means that their old age pension will be limited to 6 per cent. Whereas if they have a slightly smaller Canada Pension Plan pension, they will then get some GIS and they will be able to get their OAS at the rate of