

Old Age Security Act Amendment

opinion of hon. members. If you allow me to make just one point—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suggest to the hon. member that it is the prerogative of the Chair to decide to what degree comments may be made—would the hon. member please resume his seat—to what extent they may be made with regard to procedural matters. In the case of the motion moved by the hon. member for Sherbrooke, there is no shadow of a doubt that it is not even an amendment, and I fail to see what arguments the hon. member could advance in support of that motion which, as I said, is a substantive motion.

The hon. member for Lapointe might move, if he wishes, a modified version of that motion but, as such, obviously it is not an amendment which can be accepted by this house.

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, I believe there is merely a flaw in the drafting of the motion and not a basic defect. I suggest it should read: "That all the words following the word that—

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is obviously more than a flaw in the drafting. The amendment is absolutely out of order, and I think that the hon. member for Lapointe could submit a proposal along the lines of the motion moved, if he wishes. I do not say in advance that the amendment would be acceptable, but surely, as it now stands, it definitely cannot be accepted.

[English]

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to participate in the debate at this stage because of the importance of the measure which is before us, and I will align myself with those hon. members whom the minister characterized as stupid and dishonest. This statement made by the minister appears on page 10894 of *Hansard* and reads as follows:

Anyone who equates the means test with the norms set out in this program is either stupid or dishonest.

I want to be placed in that category along with the hon. member for Brantford (Mr. Brown) and others because I know, I believe and I understand that this bill does introduce a means test. The hon. member for Brantford was not intimidated by the minister's statement, as were other members on the government side, and I congratulate him

for his courage. We on this side are not intimidated either. The minister has now characterized all of us who have spoken about the means test, and all old age pensioners who will object to proposals involving a means test, as stupid and dishonest. It will take the minister more than a year to extricate himself from his insulting statement which is reported in *Hansard*.

● (4:50 p.m.)

When I spoke at the resolution stage I drew attention to the fact that earlier in the session, in July and in November, I had asked the minister to let us know whether his proposal, which he denied involved a means test and which he denied involved a needs test, involved a check on a person's income and resources. In July, and in the first week of November, he did not have the courage to answer my question. He said I would have to wait until the bill was presented. All the time he knew that the bill involved what he calls a test of income, but he did not have the courage to tell us that in September and in the first week of November. He was afraid because it would have disclosed his hand, and he would have then learned that he was imposing on the old age pensioners of this country a means test to which they should not be subjected.

I do not know what has happened to cause the minister to do this. If you look at the bill, Mr. Speaker—and we will be examining it in detail subsequently—you will find that the minister will have a whole army of people snooping to see whether or not honest disclosures of income have been made. He obviously does not trust the old age pensioners.

I just happened to glance at the proposed new section 17, where I find, if you read it in full, that there are nine different sources of additional information to which the minister and his officials may refer to check the disclosures or lack of disclosures made by the old age pensioners. It runs the whole gamut from the department of national health, the Department of National Revenue, the finance department, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the unemployment insurance commission, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Then, information may be obtained from any provincial authority administering a program of assistance payments; resort may be had to any information obtained pursuant to any other act relating to income or income from a particular source; and lastly, where social insurance numbers have been assigned under the authority of any other act the minister or