

Old Age Security Act

people to give them credit for it. But I would suggest it does not meet the needs, indeed the rights, of our senior citizens and is not in line with progressive thinking in the whole field of human and social development.

I said a moment ago—and I am just about through; as I have said I do not want to take up an undue portion of the time that remains, which is very little—that I regret that we did not get the bill through yesterday so there would be no question about these increases being in the cheques of our pensioners at the end of June. I regret yesterday's performance for another reason, too. It is not often that we on this side of the House spar off against each other. The three parties on this side of the House usually present a common front against the government side. Be that as it may, I was quite disappointed yesterday that our friends of the Progressive Conservative party spent the whole afternoon presenting motions, amendments and arguments which led to one point only: they were trying to get a little more into the escalation clause. I give them credit for the fact that they got down to precise figures as to what they wanted. They wanted to get the basic pension up to around \$90 a month by giving the pensioners the full cost of living increase back to the time when the pension was set at \$75 a month. But that is all they contended for yesterday, \$90 a month.

I say to my hon. friends of the Progressive Conservative party that if \$90 a month is all they have to offer, as opposed to the \$82.88 from the Liberals, then they might as well quit talking about pensions. The fact is that their leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), has said publicly and categorically that if he is elected to power he will not go for a basic pension of \$150 a month. So, despite the things that individual members of that party may say, that is now the position of the official opposition—one of opposition to a basic pension of \$150 a month. I regard these attempts to make motions to raise the pension to \$90 a month as an effort to cover up that basic inadequacy. It is a position pensioners cannot accept.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there it is. I have accused others of speaking as though they were on the hustings, and maybe that charge will be thrown back at me. But at this point I would suggest it is a good idea to make sure that the lines are clearly drawn. The Liberals are satisfied with a \$80 pension, now raised to \$82.88, with the income test as a means of providing additional money. The Conservatives are satisfied with a basic \$80 pension provided it is escalated to around \$90 to \$95. My hon. friends of the Social Credit party can speak for themselves, and they have done so. Our position, and I believe it is the position of the senior citizens of this country and of most Canadians, is that the basic pension ought to be raised to \$150 a month; that the income tax structure should be modified along the lines I have suggested; that the pension payable both under the Old Age Security Act and the Canada Pension Plan should be available at age 60; and that special steps, if necessary, should be taken so that spouses a few years younger—not the young brides to which reference was made a moment ago, but those a few years younger than the breadwinner—should be included in the pension. These are the steps that we think ought to be taken, and I regret that they are not in the bill. However, as far as the bill is concerned, the provisions it contains

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

represent a move in the right direction, and we hope it will pass when this debate ends at 4.05 this afternoon.

Mr. Ross Whicher (Bruce): Mr. Speaker, as always, I listened with enjoyment to the previous speaker. He very kindly stated what the position of the government was on this bill, and also took it upon himself to tell parliament and the country what the position of the Conservative party was. Then, he said that his position was that there should be a basic increase in the old age pension to \$150 a month for the senior citizens of Canada.

What the hon. member did not do, Mr. Speaker, was to tell this parliament and the people of Canada where to get the \$1,400 million that that increase would cost. I say that it is intellectually dishonest for any member of this House, even though he be a man of the calibre of the last speaker, a completely respected member of the House who has done much for parliament and this country, to stand up in the House and suggest that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) should extract an additional \$1,400 million in taxes, without spelling out that this is how the money would have to be raised.

It is all very well to tell the House, through you, Mr. Speaker, that he would adjust the income tax rate. I'll say it would be adjusted! It is so adjusted now that every member of this House admits he would like to lower taxes. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) would adjust it so high that the middle class people of this country, who are already over-taxed, simply could not stand the burden of the taxation that the hon. member suggested only a few minutes ago.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Not even out of a gross national product of \$95 billion?

Mr. Whicher: This is wrong and it shows, in my opinion, a complete lack of responsibility. The hon. member comes from a party with 20 members, and there is every possibility that its membership will be reduced after the next election. Yet he stands up in his place, knowing perfectly well that his party will never come to power, and tells the members of this House and the people of Canada that a further \$1,400 million in taxes should be raised. That is not the way I do business, Mr. Speaker. When I suggest that some money be raised, I spell out just where the money should be found. I have always said, and many other hon. members have said, including the hon. member who has just spoken, that taxes ought to be reduced. The hon. member wants them reduced when the budget debate is on, and he wants them increased when he wants more money for our pensioners.

Let me say this to the House: there is not one single member of this House, that I know of anyway, be he government member, member of the official opposition, a member of the NDP or the Cr ditistes, who does not want to give the senior citizens of this country every single nickel that the country can afford. The hon. member is not the only member of the House who knows that these are the people who made Canada great; of that we are sure. When I had the great honour of moving the adoption of the address in reply to the Throne Speech some months ago, I said that the senior citizens of Canada were treated better than anywhere else in the world, and that statement