

Old Age Security Act Amendment

and with its provisions. I was not sure from the comments of the hon. member who has just taken his seat whether his confrontation with the bill would lead him to support it or to oppose it on a vote.

Rarely, Mr. Speaker, has legislation before this house produced such chameleon and contradictory comments from hon. gentlemen opposite. On the one hand, the program is condemned as iniquitous and parsimonious, an attempt to legislate guaranteed annual poverty. Yet in the next breath we are urged to extend the program into perpetuity and to apply its provisions without qualification to Canadian pensioners residing in 60 different countries.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, with all the hand wringing and haranguing, hon. members opposite have failed to meet or to overcome the crucial and central advantage of the guaranteed income approach, which is that it does more than any alternative proposal for those older people who are most in need of additional income, those who are now trying to get by on the \$75 a month old age security cheque.

Mr. McCleave: Could I ask the minister a question. Who wrote his speech?

Mr. MacEachen: I would be happy to give a speech without a text if the hon. member insists.

● (9:00 p.m.)

Hon. members opposite, especially the hon. member for Prince Edward-Lennox (Mr. Alkenbrack), painted a compelling picture of those older persons who have only \$75 to get by on each month. The hon. member said that the poor senior citizen who now receives a pension of \$75 a month must reveal all of his private affairs to the government before he can receive any supplementary amount up to \$30 a month. I simply remind the hon. member for Prince Edward-Lennox that the people he describes—

Mr. McCleave: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I think the minister is even more short-sighted than we are accustomed to his being in this house. In the second place, he appears to be reading from a printed text, which is not permitted by the rules of the house.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McCleave: Let those opposite sigh and bleat like sheep, but I am raising a point of order. If the minister has anything to say out of his heart or his mind, he should be able to

say it without a printed text. I am merely invoking the rule which has been invoked in the house for a long time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It appears that the minister is following his notes very closely but we shall probably find that as he proceeds he will be able to depart from the text.

Mr. MacEachen: I assure the hon. member that I do have notes and that I intend to extend them a great deal, if only for the purpose of satisfying the petty attitude of the senior member from Halifax.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Fulton: It would be much more appreciated if the minister would shorten them.

Mr. MacEachen: I will make my comments as brief as the situation requires but I would remind hon. gentlemen opposite that they occupied four days on second reading of this bill, five days in committee, and on third reading, which has just commenced, they have engaged in a series of destructive comments.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Starr: I rise on a point of order. The opposition has made a concession to the government by agreeing that the third reading of this bill may be considered this evening. We did not do so in order that the minister might get up and make a political speech as he is doing now and as he did on another occasion when the opposition allowed him extra time beyond the limit allowed even to a minister. If he persists in doing this we shall continue the debate on third reading for the balance of the evening and tomorrow. He will either have to change his mind and co-operate or this is what we will do. The minister has to give consideration to this point if he wants the bill to go through tonight.

Mr. MacEachen: That is not a point of order. I propose to answer the comments which have been made about this legislation and it is the responsibility of the opposition if they wish to pass it or not.

Mr. Starr: You have said it.

Mr. MacEachen: I will not be blackmailed into curtailing my comments by the remarks of the opposition house leader.

Mr. Starr: You will never get it through tonight.

Mr. MacEachen: I made no request to the official opposition at any time that they should