

Old Age Pensions

Mr. J. A. Byrne (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I was under the impression that the hon. member for Kamloops was extremely anxious to enter this debate with respect to the so-called grievance raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I am still at a loss to determine how this discussion can be interpreted as a grievance. Nonetheless, I certainly favour an increase in the old age security payments and, for that matter, those under every other welfare program that we have on the statute books. In my opinion this is not a grievance. It is simply a discussion of whether or not the old age security payments will be increased at this session of parliament. At no time in the house have I heard a statement to the effect that there would be an increase. I have been ever hopeful that there would be an increase.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If this is not a grievance, in the opinion of the hon. member, does he have any right to speak on it?

Mr. Byrne: Mr. Speaker, I have been required to bow to your ruling and I humbly do so. However, I maintain that when speaking on this question, I am doing so in the hope that it will be beneficial to the people who are at present in receipt of old age security and old age assistance payments. It is not a grievance. I do not have a grievance.

Mr. Ellis: Your grievance is against grievances.

Mr. Byrne: I think the government have been acting wisely up to this point, and I would beseech them to go further and give an increase. But it cannot be said that the government has been delinquent in not announcing its intentions if it does not intend to increase the pensions; and we have no assurance that there is that intention to increase them. Neither have we had any assurance to the contrary. Hence in rising at this moment to discuss this matter, I am doing as I would have done and as I was prepared to do—when the motion for the hon. member for Vancouver South was brought before the house, but I do not have my notes at hand.

Mr. Knowles: It will not be reached.

Mr. Byrne: As has been pointed out, if one does not take part in this debate the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre will presume—or whether he presumes it or not he will go about the country saying it—that no one on the Liberal side was interested in the old age pensioners. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

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Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I went out of my way to name 13 Liberal members who had committed themselves this session in favour of something being done about this matter.

Mr. Byrne: I quite agree with the hon. member.

Mr. Knowles: Those 13 did not include my hon. friend.

Mr. Byrne: I agree that my hon. friend mentioned 13 Liberal members who took part in the debate earlier. But all of a sudden he has determined that he has a strong grievance against the government.

Mr. Ellis: You are satisfied with inaction.

Mr. Byrne: Mr. Speaker, I am not satisfied. Anyone who is satisfied is ready to pass off the face of this earth. Hon. gentlemen should know that. None of us is satisfied at any time, but we keep our demands in perspective and attempt to do what the general economy of Canada will sustain. We do not rush into unlimited undertakings like some of those demanded by hon. members on the other side of the house. Every member on this side is sympathetic and wants to do what can be done for those who are in receipt of a pension.

Mrs. Fairclough: That is enough.

Mr. Byrne: Hon. members seem to be in a great hurry.

Mr. Barnett: I should like to know whether or not the hon. member is labouring under the delusion that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Mr. Dickey: The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is only the cheer leader.

Mr. Byrne: I have no misconception at all. When the Minister of National Health and Welfare gets up to speak he says something that is definitely a contribution and that is within the rules of the house, and at no time would he play politics with the plight of aged people.

Some hon. Members: Oh, no.

Mr. Knowles: Even your colleagues are laughing at that.

Mr. Byrne: My concern at this moment, as I said, is for the continued observance of the rules of this house, and the hon. member who raised this grievance has been stretching the rules to quite a degree.

Mr. Speaker: Has the discussion concluded on the grievance raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre? The hon. member for Kamloops.