

ization payments to certain provinces for the period April 1, 1982 to March 31, 1987.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.

### OIL SUBSTITUTION AND CONSERVATION ACT CANADIAN HOME INSULATION PROGRAM ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

**Hon. William M. Kelly** moved the third reading of Bill C-24, to amend the Oil Substitution and Conservation Act and the Canadian Home Insulation Program Act.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed, on division.

### OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Marshall, seconded by the Honourable Senator Nurgitz, for the second reading of the Bill C-26, intituled: "An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act".—(*Honourable Senator Marsden*).

**Hon. Lorna Marsden:** Honourable senators, Senator Marshall outlined yesterday afternoon the virtues of Bill C-26, to amend the Old Age Security Act. We believe that those virtues are clear, and I will not repeat them. As my colleague has already indicated, we intend to support this bill.

Senator Bonnell raised certain questions yesterday afternoon regarding the costs and other aspects of this bill, and I will not repeat his points either. I would like, however, to speak to the spirit of this bill—the very limited provisions containing the spirit of the bill—which were referred to, indeed, by its proposer.

● (1620)

In the other place, Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart has waged an inspired campaign to attempt to persuade the government to extend the provisions covering the spouse's allowance. When the bill was introduced, he pointed out the central inequity of this bill. His example was three women from his riding, all aged 62, all receiving \$427 in social assistance and all paying \$250 per month in rent. These are real women from his riding. However, only one will benefit from the provisions of this bill, the widow.

On what basis does this discrimination occur? It is not on the basis of need, because all these people are in need. It is not on the traditional, though, perhaps, now under the Charter, discriminatory basis of age; all these people are the same age. It is not on any publicly recognized basis except marital status. This is, indeed, a widow's mite. Eighty thousand never-married, divorced or separated Canadians, mostly women, are excluded from the provisions of this bill.

This issue of unfairness has been raised, as I said, from the very beginning, but the government, unfortunately, put the

[Senator Kelly]

House of Commons in a fearsome fiscal lock. "Alas," the members of the government sighed—who only very recently were berating the previous government for not extending the allowances—"we cannot afford to help anyone who did not get married in the first place or who even though separated remained married." On the Sparks Street mall, right behind the Langevin building, someone has scrawled on a letterbox, "Down with the Blue meanies." I believe that the graffiti artist had the spirit of this bill in mind.

Who are these 80,000 Canadians excluded from access to the extended benefit? Most of them are women, as we all know, and women whose lives are already difficult. They find themselves in economic need as they approach age 65. This has never been a universal provision, but why are these women alone and poor?

Honourable senators will recall what was entailed in divorce in Canada 30 to 40 years ago—the scandal and the extremes of misery to which most couples had to be pushed in order to face the divorce courts. That is why a very good proportion of these excluded people are separated, self-supporting but not divorced.

What about those never-married women who also will not be served by this bill? Some women, it is true, did not ever want to marry. For many women, there was a choice to be made in those years between having a career and being married. One excluded the other. In addition, we all have among our families and friends women who were pledged to marry young men who went off to war and who did not return. Many of those women wanted and expected husbands and families. They knew all the heartbreak but none of the social recognition which widows, for example, received. Now we have excluded them from economic support in their older years. Honourable colleagues, this will be judged as a mean-spirited act.

We support this bill with only half our hearts and urge our colleagues in government to undertake two campaigns, first, to extend this allowance beyond spouses to all 60-year-olds, men and women, as soon as possible; and, second, to propose strong measures, as Liberal governments have done, to prevent the next generation of women and men from being so unprotected and so poor in their older years; pension reform; affirmative action; employment opportunities; and positive measures so that "down with the Blue meanies" can no longer be applied to bills emerging from this chamber.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Jack Marshall:** Honourable senators—

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Honourable senators, I have to inform the Senate that if the Honourable Senator Marshall speaks now, his speech will have the effect of closing the debate on the motion for the second reading of Bill C-26.

**Senator Marshall:** Honourable senators, I commend Senator Marsden on her remarks. As a member of the Social Affairs Committee, she is a welcome addition. The knowledge she has brought with her as a result of her involvement in the Ontario