

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

reminded of the fact that they took part in a cut in the standard of living of their constituents. These cuts have a particularly devastating impact upon women because cuts in pensions disproportionately affect women.

I see that my time is drawing to an end. In conclusion, once again I emphasize the fact, as many of my constituents in Burnaby have pointed out, that these cuts are unfair. They are inequitable and basically represent an attack on the victims of inflation rather than coming to grips with the real economic problems of the country. Certainly we cannot accept that kind of attack either by the Liberal Government or by its Conservative allies.

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we have been debating Bill C-131 since November 18. By now we have had ample opportunity to examine its every detail through first reading, second reading, Committee meetings, and now through report stage debate.

At the beginning of yesterday's debate, the Minister said that we had already heard 71 Members speak on the debate of this particular Bill since last November. I would not need to speak if I were not concerned that much of the rhetoric we have heard about the details has effectively buried the basic reason for introducing and passing Bill C-131. I cannot remain silent and let that happen.

We on the Government side of the House must remind the Opposition and the public that we regard the scourge of inflation as a devilish force which erodes the purchasing power of those who can least afford it—those on fixed incomes, the welfare poor, the working poor and the unemployed. That is precisely why we have begun this massive program of six and five to reduce inflation. We are not yet able to say that we can stop inflation, but we have to reduce it because it is ravaging the savings of the elderly and hurting the working poor. Yes, we have decided that even to bring inflation down to 6 per cent would require the efforts of all Canadians.

We on the Government side of the House decided that it would mean an all-out effort on the part of the Government. We decided that we had to begin with ourselves, with our Public Service and with what the Government was paying out of the taxpayers' coffers. It had to apply to all Government programs. Only if we proved our sincerity and determination to apply this to every aspect could we appear to be credible or could we hope to get others to follow our example. We must set the example and appear credible if we are to succeed in calling upon and involving the co-operation of the Provinces to join us in applying six and five to their Public Services and to all their programs where their taxpayers are paying out money. Otherwise, the private sector knows that the war against inflation could not succeed if it alone were left to fight the battle.

There are some people receiving Old Age Security pensions who happily have additional incomes. They can and should and probably want to join in to do their part in the battle against inflation. That is why Bill C-131 exists. It ensures that they

also are included. It is in their interests and the interests of everyone that inflation comes down. We have set our hearts and our minds to the battle against inflation through the six and five program. This is our resolve. Bill C-131 is only a part of that program.

We shall keep faith with all groups, that no one group will alone have to exercise restraint. We are all in it together. We shall not waver and flinch just because of our success, because of political expediency or because of the petty politics played by Opposition Parties.

It is distasteful to me as a Liberal to hear the Opposition lecturing us about compassion for the elderly. I am a Liberal precisely because it was a Liberal Government that brought in Old Age Security in the first place, that brought in spouses allowances, that brought in the Canada Pension Plan, that brought in the Guaranteed Income Supplement and that brought in medicare, all of which have taken away the fear and horror of becoming older that existed in the past. It is rather tragic to hear the Opposition Parties lecturing us, when we have brought in all this concern and compassion, that we should be compassionate for the elderly.

Mr. Taylor: You are the ones who are taking it away.

Mr. de Corneille: Also it was a Liberal Government which gave full indexing to the Old Age Security pension, to the Canada Pension and to the Guaranteed Income Supplement. We did this precisely to try to shelter the aged from the ravages of inflation.

How dare those Parties lecture us when now, in order to protect the elderly and all other vulnerable people in our society, we say that we must introduce six and five to reduce inflation.

Mr. Taylor: How dare you rob the old.

Mr. de Corneille: They conveniently ignore the fact that through Bill C-131 we are living up to our policy and tradition of protecting the vulnerable.

Mr. Taylor: You are robbing the hungry.

Mr. de Corneille: When they stop shouting I shall continue. It is really getting to them to hear some facts for a change. They are bleating and crying out in agony to hear the policy of the Liberal Government throughout all these decades to protect the aged and those who need protection.

Mr. Taylor: What are you talking about?

• (1720)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Parliamentary Secretary has the floor.

Mr. Taylor: Let him tell the truth then.

Mr. de Corneille: We do this by making sure that those who are elderly and need supplements will get an extra increase just to make sure that they will be covered to a level of full indexation. That is how much we care. We put a 6 per cent inflation