

right to point out emphatically the shortcomings which exist in the bill. Likewise, it does not deny us the right to complain about the way in which the minister so piously asserts that because this bill achieves the purpose he has in mind we should accept it without question and not press our points.

It is true that this bill has been considered in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, presided over by one of the most excellent chairmen we have, the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Isabelle), but I regret to say that the rules against amendments involving the expenditure of money prevented us from making any amendments to the bill when it was before that standing committee. As hon. members are aware, this bill will provide something for 80,000 or perhaps 85,000 persons between the ages of 60 and 65, but it will do nothing for some 685,000 persons in the same age bracket who do not fit the particular category spelled out in the bill.

● (1650)

What Bill C-62 proposes is that in the case of a married couple, if one partner is 65 or over and is already drawing old age security, the other partner, if that other partner is between 60 and 65, may also get the pension—provided, of course, that the whole proposition is subject to an income test with respect to the total income of both parties. It is the marriage test, the age test and the income test which result in only some 85,000 persons out of 750,000 in this bracket getting the benefit of this bill.

There is no question that any step in this direction deserves support. No one is going to vote against it or oppose it. But I argue very strongly that although it is a step in the right direction, it is far too timid a step for the government to be taking at this time. This measure does nothing for spinsters, widows, bachelors, widowers, divorced or separated persons between the ages of 60 and 65. The minister says that the purpose of the bill is to rescue a couple from having to get by on a pension for one. If a person living with the partner in marriage has the right to be rescued from poverty, I submit that the same right should be extended to a spinster, widow, bachelor, widower, separated or divorced person. The minister's reply when we were in committee was that if such persons are in need, they can fall back on social assistance—in other words, on welfare. We contended in committee—and I contend very strongly now—that even just in terms of the title of the legislation, old age security has been established in Canada as not only something that people get as a right but something that has honour attached to it. More of us are joining the club every day, Mr. Speaker.

On the other hand, social assistance or welfare still has a certain stigma attached to it. In pursuing this line of argument today, the minister said that he did not like the situation in the case of a married couple when one of them had to go on welfare, so he wants to correct that situation. In effect, he was saying that the 62-year old wife of the 67-year old husband should not have to go on welfare. I agree with him. But what about the 62-year old widow, the 62-year old spinster, the 62-year old bachelor or the 62-year old widower? If the principle the minister is enunciating is a desire to save persons from having to go on welfare, surely that principle applies across the board and not just to a limited few.

### *Old Age Security Act*

Just the other day one of my colleagues asked if we should not condemn this legislation out of hand because it is discriminatory. I told him I like using strong language about bills that are deficient, but I think that the trouble with this bill is, perhaps in more realistic terms, that it is just a beginning—a step: it meets the needs of a very limited number of people. The tragedy is that it takes so much pushing, prodding, cajoling and pouncing to get this government to move at all.

I suppose the feature of this bill that to the greatest extent brings out its unfairness, its discriminatory aspect and the fact that it does not go far enough is the one that was discussed most in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. This point was made in the House on second reading and has been mentioned by some of us for many months since the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), in the midst of the election campaign, announced this legislation. The fears which were expressed during the past several months and on second reading were confirmed by the minister in the standing committee. The situation is this, Mr. Speaker. Here is a wife who is 62 and whose husband is 66. He is on pension, so she gets it. Next year, the 66-year old husband turns 67 and dies. The woman is now 63 and a widow. The pension she has been enjoying for a year, out of the goodness of the heart of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, is withdrawn. So from age 63 to 65 she has to go on welfare. Today the minister said that is something one member of a marriage partnership should not have to do. What does the minister think he can get away with?

**Mrs. Holt:** You have said that three times.

**An hon. Member:** Simmer down, Simma!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I hear my hon. friend complaining about something over there, Mr. Speaker. No doubt she will make her contribution. She says I have said this three times. I tell her that I have said it at least 33 times, and I will keep on saying it. I have been saying these things in this place since 1942, and I believe things are a bit better now because some of us have been doing so.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Last June, the Prime Minister said this bill would create as many problems as it would solve, so I think it shows lack of foresight on the part of this minister to bring it in in this form. Or perhaps he is being hamstrung by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) who will not give him the few more million dollars that it will take to provide to persons aged 60 or 65 a pension that is fair. What is fair, Mr. Speaker? When the minister is faced with this question he sometimes talks about what it would cost to pay old age security universally at age 60 the way it is now at age 65. None of us have been asking for that at this time. What we have been asking for is that the old age security be paid to persons between ages 60 and 65 who are out of the labour market. That would cover all spouses, male and female, who are in that area and also spinsters, widows, bachelors and widowers who are not working, as well as many of those who are now working but would dearly like to get out of the rat race of modern industry.