

Old Age Security Act

have just quoted, Mr. Speaker. I submit that this, again, indicates a lack of human consideration. Another case I would like to mention is that of a citizen on old age assistance who made the mistake of trying to supplement his income. He earned some \$240 by selling newspapers over a year and found that he had to repay part of this amount. While I realize, Mr. Speaker, that regulations as to limits have to be laid down, there should be some responsibility on the state to become cognizant of exceptional cases of extreme hardship. Money does not do everything. I submit that the government should consider very seriously staffing the various district offices with responsible people who are capable of looking into these cases, and the regulations should be broadened to allow for human consideration and discretion where the need is evident.

Mr. McGrath: Hear, hear!

Mr. Marshall: It is difficult for me to understand, also, why couples are discriminated against. With the increase, the amount available for single old age pensioners will rise to \$135 per month, whereas a couple will lose \$15 a month if a man is living with his wife.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Shame.

Mr. Marshall: There is not much point in repeating many of the other failings in the bill, Mr. Speaker, because many of my colleagues have already pointed these out. I hope the minister will take note of the very important human consideration that should apply to those receiving old age pension who suffer from exceptional incapacity. I hope that something will be done to look after this serious problem. I can only say that I am disappointed that other disadvantaged citizens, particularly the blind and the disabled, will have to wait for discussions to take place between the minister and the provinces. This could have been an ongoing process over the past two years and the results could have been announced at this time. I hope, therefore, that the minister will do his utmost to speed up these discussions so that those who suffer from blindness or any other disability—this applies especially to those who are mentally incapacitated—will receive increases in benefits which are so urgently needed.

Another weakness, Mr. Speaker, is in the federal-provincial relationship concerning old age security and the Canada Assistance Plan. May I quote as an example a couple in the province of Newfoundland who are allowed, under social assistance, the grand amount of \$130. The husband receiving old age assistance gets \$111.41 and, under the maximum allowable, the province pays the wife \$18.59. This means, Mr. Speaker, that with the increase in old age security, the husband will now receive \$135 but that the \$18.59 will now be denied to the wife, giving them in total an increase of only \$5. This will go a long way in the fight to help our aged, Mr. Speaker! I am sure the government will agree that this will help that aged couple a great deal.

[Mr. Marshall.]

I also go along with some of my colleagues who stated today that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) is not altogether to blame for the callousness of the cabinet. I remember well reading a few months ago in the local newspaper about the disagreement in the cabinet which turned down by 50 per cent the increases that the minister recommended. The article related that six members of the cabinet fought vigorously against the recommended increases: I am sure that the many aged and disadvantaged citizens of this country would like to know who the six ministers were. I do not think one has to be very smart to guess who they were. Fortunately, this is a time of good will and I would not want to spoil the festive season by venturing to guess who the nasty six were who turned down the increase that had been recommended by the minister.

There are many thousands of disappointed Canadians in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Many of them had faith and hope that their need would be relieved. They had this faith because of the loud and clear proclamations of our debt to that segment of society which needs our help. The proclamations came from many sources, from throne speeches, from white papers, from poverty committees, and very soon it is to come from the \$7.5 million bookstore called Information Canada.

● (9:20 p.m.)

I hope the minister will try and impress upon his colleagues the shortcomings that exist in the bill, in order to provide some relief for our aged citizens. I hope the government will have a change of heart with regard to the 2 per cent escalation clause.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I have only a few comments to make at the time of the study of this very important bill which particularly concerns one class of our society, the old people who hope to live a few more years with a little security.

The amendment proposed by our colleague from Winnipeg-North-Centre (Mr. Knowles) to change clause 1 by deleting lines 4 to 11 means that we do not approve restricting the pension to the amount established in Bill C-202.

I entirely agree with this motion because in 1970, the very people who propose the limit at the amount stipulated in clause 1 would not want to live with such a low pension.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that Canada would gain if it gave a pension higher than the amount established in the bill in order to increase the purchasing power of each group of people who are suffering from a lack of purchasing power to meet their essential needs.

As it must be the case for other hon. members, I receive each week from people 65 and over complaints to the effect that their income is too low to live decently at home.

Mr. Speaker, the old age security should be paid at 60. The proof is a Christmas card which I have received