

the provinces can come forward with suggestions on how best to manage these questions, and so can we. It may well be that that might be the result of it.

Senator Molgat: Mr. Cafik, I have the impression that the government of Manitoba has made it clear that they would not be increasing rents. Has the province, in fact, indicated that, do you know?

Mr. Cafik: I have heard that, but I know nothing to back it up.

Senator Molgat: There has been no communication back to the federal government?

Mr. Cafik: Not that I am aware of.

Senator Cameron: There was something in last night's paper to that effect.

Senator Molgat: I was under the impression that the province had indicated that.

Mr. Cafik: I have that impression, too, senator, but I do not know.

Senator Argue: The minister might have heard.

Mr. Cafik: The minister, of course, has been travelling. He may know, but, unfortunately, he is not here today.

Senator Molgat: My question is in regard to the comfort allowances in the various provinces. If the figures are not comparable, can the department give us the other factors involved? If it is not a comparable figure, can we establish some kind of comparison so that we know if the treatment is reasonably equal?

Mr. Cafik: We do not have that information with us, but we could research it and provide it to you.

Senator Molgat: Thank you.

Mr. Cafik: We will do our best, senator, to provide the committee with that information. [See Appendix "B"]

Senator Molgat: Thank you.

Senator Argue: Mr. Chairman, so far as Saskatchewan is concerned, my information is that the comfort allowance does not include hair cuts, razor blades, taxi fares, shoe shines and some other complicated things. It does not include the cost of a curling game; it does not include the cost of a cup of coffee downtown; it does not include the \$1 gift to a niece at Christmastime; it does not include the \$2 gift to the church that a person belongs to.

They may give some clothes—God bless them in Saskatchewan—over and above the \$15, but I want to make it clear, without commenting on any other province, that in Saskatchewan the comfort allowance is for a whole raft of things that I would say any

Canadian citizen should have a right to obtain and should have a right to do, like giving a small gift to a relative or making a small donation to the church, or taking a friend out for a cup of coffee and a piece of pie. These things cannot be done in Saskatchewan and I think it is a disgrace that they cannot be done, and that is why I have been campaigning for this.

Now, it was suggested earlier that if you want to deal with comfort allowances amendments will have to be made to the Canada Assistance Plan. In my opinion, the Canada Assistance Plan already provides for comfort allowances. If the province increases the comfort allowance, Ottawa, out of its generosity and its foresight, comes through with half the money. So you do not have to amend the Canada Assistance Plan to provide for comfort allowances. It is already there. The only stumbling block to comfort allowances is that the provinces steal the increases in the old age security. That is exactly what they do. And I put it to the witness that what is happening is that, with respect to this increase of \$17 a month, in some provinces they are going to save an equivalent amount under the Canada Assistance Plan and the provincial treasuries are going to pocket \$8.50. That is the danger in this whole thing.

Sure, some of the homes will come in and take the money, but the provincial treasuries will hold their hands out too, and they can take \$8.50 which I suggest to you the people of Canada in fact intend to go the old age pensioners.

I do not think the people of this country, supporting the passage of this bill unanimously in our Canadian House of Commons and unanimously in the Senate, believe that the provinces should have the right to get in and take half of it.

I would appreciate your response to that. I am not saying they cannot take half, but I am saying that Parliament does not want them to take half.

Mr. Cafik: I would certainly agree that it is often difficult to judge the will of Parliament, but taking the risk of going on to that kind of thin ice, I know that when I voted for that bill as an individual I certainly did not intend to subsidize any province.

Senator Argue: Well, I am no constitutional lawyer; in fact, I am not a lawyer at all: I am just a backwoods farmer. I got a little land cleared and what doesn't have woods on it has rocks. Nevertheless, I think that the federal government has the right to say that since it is paying the old age security pension it can stipulate how this money can be divided, since it is federal money being paid to a Canadian citizen. Any consequence of the federal government's saying how the money could be divided is an ancillary consequence; it is something that happens outside of this particular thing. So I would argue that we have the jurisdiction to say how the old age pension, paid solely from Ottawa under this legislation, may be divided.

Now, I have had competent advice on this particular issue—and I realize that one may at times get competent advice on various issues that in itself may vary—but I believe that my competent advice is among the most competent advice available, and so I understand that this, apart from its merits, which in my view are excellent, is within the right of Parliament to do.