

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

issues that distinguish between truth and hypocrisy on the part of the Conservative Party.

The legislation we are discussing today ultimately deals with the economic policy of the six and five program. Anyone who is evaluating the economy and the six and five policy and who has any integrity will see that this legislation is destructive.

The Liberal Party has failed to instil any sense of direction in the people of this country in attempting economic recovery. It has, instead, imposed its six and five policy on pensioners, those who depend on Family Allowances and others in our society who cannot afford the kind of restraint the Government is imposing upon them. If the Government had imposed that kind of restraint on Michael Pitfield, perhaps its credibility might be somewhat stronger today. I would suggest that the Liberal Government of Canada is probably one of the most discredited groups in the country today. It has discredited itself because of its blatant economic attack on pensioners, retired civil servants and those who depend on the Family Allowance income. It is a totally wrong direction to take toward economic recovery.

The previous speaker mentioned that we are anticipating a new budget and speech from the Throne if this session ever ends. It is amazing that we have not heard one constructive suggestion from the Government in the time that we have been here. It has only caused chaos and conflict in the country up to this time, and this legislation in front of us now is no exception. I hope that the Government will resolve to find programs that will assist the country so that we may see a new Speech from the Throne and a new budget. Hopefully, there will be measures in the budget that will provide assistance to the senior citizens in this country, instead of hammering the pensioners and retired civil servants as this legislation does.

It has been many years since the Government last introduced any constructive measures to assist senior citizens. At that time the Government added a paltry sum of \$35 to the base rate of pensions, and allowed it to increase through indexation. However, that foundation of indexation has been chopped out as a result of the present legislation. That \$35 increase was a sham. We should be considering a program to support senior citizens instead of being faced with this legislation in the House.

I find it very offensive that the Government is totally ignoring the diversity of this country. This is evident when one sees the assumptions made in the Bill. Senior citizens who live in rural areas such as the area I represent find the cost of living extremely high. They find the cost of food, housing, transportation and other services extremely high. At this time they need every nickel they can manage to eke out of what is already a very inadequate pension. They do not need their pensions cut back by a six and five program. The Government's assumptions are totally inaccurate when dealing with senior citizens. Instead, we should be considering an increase in pensions to meet the cost of living, and certainly an increase in the base of those pensions.

I would like to deal with housing as it affects senior citizens. There is a great shortage of decent housing for senior citizens in many communities. What housing is available is generally high cost. Provincial Governments, which have traditionally taken responsibility for carrying on senior citizen programs, have reduced revenues, with the result that senior citizen housing programs are in a state of collapse. Therefore, there are hundreds of senior citizens in small communities such as Powell River waiting for access to decent and reasonably priced housing. We should be considering matters such as this, instead of trying to find ways to cut indexing on senior citizens' pensions. They should be provided with additional services. As well, the Government should be considering ways to offset the high cost of living.

Intermediate care for seniors is another area of concern. Many senior citizens do not have access to intermediate and extended care facilities. Many of the facilities in this country are without adequate funds and have very limited programs. Many of these facilities are merely human storehouses where people are put out of sight of the community. In many cases they are the most appalling spectacles I have ever laid my eyes on. Yet the Government sits on its thumbs doing nothing for senior citizens who need those types of services. The hypocrisy is astounding.

We should be considering the provision of better recreation facilities for seniors, instead of capping their pensions at six and five. We should be providing adequate recreation and community support services for seniors so they could enjoy their declining years, instead of worrying about what the Government has in store for them in its next measure.

Most senior citizens are confined because of inadequate transportation services. They are becoming less active and, in some cases, they are in declining health and thereby confined to their homes. They are not able to participate with family and friends in the community. The Government's role, both federally and provincially, is absolutely disgusting in this regard.

Finally, I would suggest that the matter comes down to straight politics. There are three Parties in the House. I believe the Conservatives have clearly illustrated that they are absolutely in bed with the Liberals on this particular issue. They favour the restraint program. It is not Dome, Massey Ferguson or Chrysler who are being told to tighten their belts. It is not Ian Sinclair or the Royal Bank of Canada. Those two Parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, chose to make senior citizens tighten their belts and probably take their belts off and tighten them around their throats. This hypocrisy must end.

Those two Parties have to take their heads out of the sand and recognize that we cannot have it both ways. We have to stand up on this principle and provide adequate funding for these people and abandon this self-destructive approach of the six and five program, especially as it is applied to seniors, retired civil servants and people attempting to live on Family Allowance.