

one of the most important moves being to abolish appeals to the House from Speakers' rulings, a status has been ensured for the Speaker which he had not enjoyed.

I share the hon. member's feelings about the present incumbent and the feelings expressed in the editorial he quoted. I believe it was because of an appreciation of his qualities that the House at the beginning of this Parliament again unanimously selected him to be the presiding officer of the House. Because of that expectation, in the last federal election he ran as an independent candidate in his constituency and, as I understand it, was unopposed by any of the parties in an official sense. I believe a candidate ran against him but this candidate was not sponsored by any of the leaders presently in this House. That was a general manifestation of the desire of the political process to maintain the present Speaker in office. I hope the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has not ruled out that procedure as one of the options or appropriate steps he would suggest as a way to ensure the continued occupancy of the chair by the present incumbent.

• (10:10 p.m.)

Before the question was asked, and since, I have attempted to study some of the literature on the subject of a permanent speakership. It has been a difficult subject. As my hon. friend knows, at one time the British established a select committee to determine how appropriate steps could be taken to reach the goal of a permanent speakership. Men like Winston Churchill were on that committee, but the final result was that the system then in vogue was recommended for retention. It so happened that many Speakers of the British House continued in office despite the intrusion of elections, which they invariably won. The British system would demonstrate that the Speaker, certainly in Britain, has had no difficulty in maintaining his seat and the electorate has understood his importance in the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret that I must interrupt the minister. As a matter of fact, I have been a little generous and he has had a little more time than he is entitled to under the Standing Orders.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL SECURITY—QUEBEC—ALLEGED APPROPRIATION
OF GUARANTEED INCOME PENSION SUPPLEMENT
BY GOVERNMENT

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, on April 5 last, I asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) if there was an agreement between the Quebec government and the federal government since the Quebec government was taking over the increase in the guaranteed minimum income supplement paid to our senior citizens.

I had then no time to explain but I will do it tonight.

The hon. members will remember that before the Christmas recess, the House adopted a legislation increas-

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

ing from \$31.83 to \$55 per month the guaranteed income supplement for senior citizens aged 65 or more and without any other income. This involved therefore a monthly increase of \$23.17.

Now, in the Province of Quebec, the Social Security Act, better known as the Social Welfare Act, provided for a supplement, especially when only the husband or the wife had reached retirement age.

This supplement varied, I repeat, from \$1 to \$30 per month, and sometimes a little more.

But as soon as the federal legislation increasing the guaranteed income supplement was passed, the Quebec government took steps to take away from old people a portion or all of the supplement granted, so that a couple or a single person did not receive more than before.

I will quote as an example the case of a lady from La Sarre, who had been granted by Quebec, after many attempts, a supplement of \$20 a month. As early as December 1970, the government of Quebec took away from her this supplement of \$20 which she required to meet her needs. After a few representations to the provincial department involved, it agreed to restore this supplement. But, as early as the day after the cheque was received, the officials of the La Sarre office took it away from this lady through means that I will call disgusting.

I could quote many similar cases where almost everybody received a supplement from the province of Quebec. The supplements have been cancelled or reduced according to the increased guaranteed income supplement from Ottawa. I am aware that my colleagues in the House know also of similar cases and are shocked by the Quebec government's attitude towards older people. This means that the Quebec government appropriates, so to speak, the increase granted by the federal government, since the older people will not get more money than they did before.

Therefore, I should like to ask the minister if there was an understanding between both governments for Quebec to proceed in such a way; it seems an indirect means by which a province is granted larger revenues.

Since the federal government cannot interfere directly with the decisions taken by the provincial governments as regards social security, perhaps the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) should at least try to come to an understanding with the provinces with a view, first of all, to gradually to lowering the age for eligibility to the old age security pension down to 60, as was the case when the retirement age was lowered from 70 to 65.

Besides, the government should grant the old age security pension to any person whose spouse receives such pension, even though that person has not reached the age provided in the act. This would dispel much worry and hardship for those couples in which only one spouse gets a pension.

If we intend to establish a really just society, let us avoid inequities and provide as much satisfaction as possible to those who, during their whole life, contributed to the development of their country, and this sometimes in