

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

The Government has pointed out that people who are in the lowest income brackets would have their Guaranteed Income Supplement increased by the amount that Bill C-131 takes away from their Old Age Security. While this is a positive measure, it involves two serious shortcomings. First, it penalizes most heavily those seniors who are just above the line in terms of having an income which disqualifies them from the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Bill C-131 cuts their pensions and they cannot make it up through the provisions to beef up the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Second, this Bill, through its provisions to compensate for the Guaranteed Income Supplement, signifies a growing reliance on the means test. When old age pensions were first introduced in the late twenties, they involved a very stingy and chiselling type of means test. We eliminated that test and we do not want to see it reintroduced.

At present, more than 50 per cent of Old Age Security recipients also receive all or part of the Guaranteed Income Supplement which involves a form of means test. As a result of eroding the Old Age Security, Bill C-131 will force more people into the economic situation where they need the income supplement with the attendant means test. This means that the Government is moving away from the whole concept of universality. In future when the Minister of National Health and Welfare speaks about universality, when Canadians hear her they will hear her in much the same way they hear President Reagan speak about peace, Gerald Bouey speak about the problems of unemployment or the Tories speak about Party unity. In other words, they will hear these words as nothing more than lip service.

In conclusion, I suggest this Bill is not the answer. It penalizes our senior citizens and does nothing for the economy. At a time when our economy needs a transfusion of new blood, as it were, the Government comes in with medieval leeching practices, feeling that perhaps the answer to the sick economy is to draw more blood out of it. Over the next two years it will be taking \$105 away from senior citizens.

• (1650)

The answer should be found, perhaps, in a new doctor, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) hesitated to suggest the other night. Yes, we do need a new doctor. We are tired of being leeches. We would like to see a doctor who could do something to build up the health of the economy instead of tear it down. We need a Government which will get our economy moving and provide opportunities for people to work again, thus providing revenue to the Government. When that happens, we will see our deficit come under some kind of control, and the Government will not have to penalize our senior citizens as a phony excuse for saying that it is doing something about the economy.

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate have passed Bill S-30, an Act to amend certain Acts in relation to Canada Day, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

[English]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT (NO. 2)

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-131, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (No. 2), as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs; and the motion of Mr. Dantzer (p. 21795).

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make some comments with regard to Bill C-131, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act.

Many of my colleagues have addressed the House on this matter and, I believe, have made very salient comments indeed on this Bill. I think it is now time that Hon. Members of the governing Party participate in a lesson in history. In the early 1920s, some 63 years ago, a generation of young Canadians, men and women, were celebrating victory in World War I, the first war to end all wars. Unfortunately, their efforts in the late twenties, in the business of rebuilding the economy, suffered a great blow in the depression which followed. Those who were fortunate enough to survive began rebuilding from the virtual ashes of our country.

Then in the late thirties and early forties, they again answered the call to arms and defended our freedoms and rights in the trenches of Europe and the rest of the world. All that kept some of our soldiers sane were their dreams. They dreamed of coming back to their loved ones and settling down in homes of their own. They were prepared to give their lives for their rights to liberty and justice. They were the people who guaranteed us the rights we have today.

When the Second World War ended, it was supposed to end all wars. Returning veterans and their colleagues who had supported them at home once again set about the task of rebuilding. Our Governments since then have realized the importance these people played in developing the institutions and, indeed, the bureaucracies of today.

The social security system was set up to protect our aging nation builders. These people are the ones whose incomes do not deserve to be protected against inflation, as the Government is now telling them through this Bill. Recently I had a