

Old Age Security Act Amendment

home. Move into a slum area; do not get too big a home because we will not assist you if you do." The same sort of thing will be done under the old age assistance plan. Can I be assured that this will not be so? Can the minister assure me that there will be a different attitude in regard to old age assistance than is being displayed under the Canada Assistance Plan? The minister knows he cannot give that assurance.

The minister should tell the provincial premiers and the provincial welfare ministers that they are not following the directives. As this measure stands it will be administered in a way that neither I nor any other legislator in this house wants it to be administered.

I am sure the Prime Minister does not want this country to drift in the wrong direction. I am sure we do not want people to have to come begging on their hands and knees. I am sure the Prime Minister does not want to have women and children standing in front of us crying. I do not want this.

I am not one who obstructs the business of the house, but I tell the minister that unless he has a very satisfactory explanation for what he is doing, unless he knows exactly what he wants, unless he can tell the premiers or the provincial ministers responsible for administering this measure that there is no means test or whatever it is called, the people in need will not receive satisfaction.

If I am quite emotional, Mr. Chairman, it is because I have seen sad cases which I wish I did not have to bring to the minister's attention. I am sure his intentions are good. If he went back to his colleagues in the cabinet I am sure that on reflection they would think twice about his statement on television. To suggest that because there are people getting \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000 salaries there should be the sort of test he envisages is not worthy of the type of minister we have.

I am sure the minister has the interests of the people at heart. He must look into the situation closely before it goes completely out of hand, before we have a situation where the number of cases builds up so much that the only remedy will be to amend the legislation. When that time comes we shall amend it. I wish that the minister would now amend the legislation in such a way that it would be more acceptable to us and to the country.

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Chairman, I did not say anything on second reading of the bill but I feel I ought to make three or four observations now on some points that concern me.

The first point has to do with the application forms that will have to be filled out by people who think they are entitled to the increase. I am concerned about the penalties involved if applications are not filled out properly. The hon. member for Simcoe East made a good point a few evenings ago which impressed me when he suggested that the people who will collect the additional increase in old age security are unique in this respect, that a great number of them have gone through two major wars, a major depression and an era when wages were low. They have had to educate families at high cost. These people were never in a position to put anything by for their old age. There are hundreds of thousands of such people in Canada. I can visualize some people who fall into this category. The vast majority of people who will be affected by this measure are in this category.

The hon. member for Simcoe East mentioned that many of our old people do not have too much education. Will the old people be able to understand the application forms they have to fill out? Will the people helping them fill out the forms say, if you do not say anything about this or about that you can get the increase? This sort of thing can happen and it has happened in other cases, not with respect to old age pensions but with respect to welfare. I have seen it happen and I have been involved in cases where it has happened. People applying for welfare have made application and have omitted stating certain facts. I know one woman who is now indebted to the government to the extent of \$1,700 through no fault of hers. To my dismay I found she could not read. I found that she had not made out her own application and she did not know what had gone on. Her husband is partially paralysed and unwittingly she has been placed in a position where she has hardly enough to live on. I can visualize the same thing happening where people without education apply for old age assistance.

A good deal has been said about the cost of administration. I will not get into that field because I do not know what the administrative costs will be. I feel I must, however, support those who suggest that the cost of administering this plan will be exorbitantly high. I cannot see how it can be otherwise with all the applications to be considered.

● (8:40 p.m.)

What concerns me mainly is the fact that we are moving away from a very good principle which was established 15 years ago and about which much has been said in the house,