

*Old Age Security Act (No. 2)*

money from the senior citizens of Canada. On November 19 the Minister of National Health and Welfare passed a handy little memo around to all Hon. Members to help us understand what Bill C-131 was really all about. It stated: "The Government is asking all Canadians who have the means to lower their expectations over the next two years in order to help bring inflation down to six and five per cent. By some degree of sacrifice on the part of all Canadians, we can bring about economic recovery in Canada." That is interesting. The Minister is calling for fair sacrifice by all.

Do you realize, Mr. Speaker, that the limit to 6 per cent of the wages of some senior public servants in Ottawa means that they will receive in excess of a \$6,000 increase in one year? That is more than many senior citizens receive all year long in total, yet many senior public servants will receive in excess of \$6,000. A typical Minister on the Government side, when his or her income is capped to 6 per cent, will receive a \$5,400 increase. That will be the sacrifice of Ministers.

It has been very interesting to read that various corporate leaders have been asking senior citizens and others to join with them in the six and five program. I noticed that Mr. W. L. Light, the President and chief executive officer of Northern Telephone Limited, only received a 47 per cent increase in 1981, but he said that he is prepared to take a 6 per cent capping of his salary for 1983, which will give him an increase of \$32,000 in 1983. Ian Sinclair, the Chairman and chief executive officer of Canadian Pacific Enterprises, has been going around the country saying that the private sector must support the six and five program and that we must all share and sacrifice together. That will be very difficult, because when his salary is capped to only 6 per cent next year he will only receive a \$46,000 increase in one year. One could go on and on, listing a whole number of the top income earners in this country who are asking everyone to rally around the six and five program and share and sacrifice equally.

When Hon. Members opposite and many senior employees working with them are asking at least 1.2 million pensioners to take a cut in the incomes that they would normally expect, one must remember that they will receive increases in income next year amounting to in excess of \$6,000, and there is no way that one can describe that as being fair and equitable. Some people are being asked to sacrifice a bit more than others. We cannot blame the senior citizens for creating and fueling inflation in our country, so we must dispose of the option of the six and five program. The Government cannot say that we will save that amount of money on the backs of senior citizens because there are all kinds of places where it could find \$50 million a year if it were interested in cutting back.

We cannot suggest for a moment that senior citizens should share because, as the Minister's memo itself states, those who have the means to lower their expectations over the next two years ought to. I suspect that when one finds that most or a good portion of the senior citizens of our country are living below the poverty level, one cannot say that they are probably the ones who can really afford to sacrifice for the six and five

program. Basically, it is an unjust, inequitable, cruel program, one which asks people to make totally different kinds of sacrifices.

I cannot for the life of me understand why we are debating Bill C-131. For that reason, at a time of peace and co-operation just before Christmas, when one thinks of those other than oneself, I would ask the Government to think of the senior citizens of Canada and to retract this insidious piece of legislation.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I was just checking the record of November 18 wherein it is reported that Your Honour gave me the floor to speak against the amendment to Bill C-131 proposed by an Hon. Member of the Conservative Party. I was just checking the official figures of the rate of inflation which I gave to the House that day, which is exactly a month ago.

This morning, Canadians were awakened by the good news that, for the first time in ages, inflation is no longer a double-digit figure. Inflation is down again. A month ago, when I made the speech on that Bill, I gave the official figure which at that time had gone down from 12.7 per cent inflation a year ago last November to 10 per cent in November, a month ago. It is now below 10 per cent, in a one-digit figure only.

That is the very context of our series of Bills implementing the program that we call the six and five program. That is the very reason why I must oppose the proposed amendment of the Conservative Party. I do it very easily, and I will explain why I say that. I must say that it is a very badly worded amendment, since our Government Bill contains no reference to so-called "special supplements". However, I think the intent of the amendment presented by the Hon. Member opposite is clear and easy to understand. The Hon. Member for Okanagan North (Mr. Dantzer) proposes an amendment today to ensure that in January, 1985, two years down the road, the old age pension would be exactly as high as if there had never been a six and five program. I believe I can sum up his amendment very easily that way. Change the Government Bill in such a way that it is like there never was a six-five program. In other words, less than half the pensioners in Canada will get a smaller increase than they would have anticipated. They will get an increase next month, but it will only be 6 per cent instead of the full indexed inflation rate.

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The Hon. Member wants us to change our Bill drastically, that it is like money put into the bank, and in two years' time they will get the full amount as if our Bill had never existed, as if the six and five program had never existed. There is no need to say I would have to oppose that. It indicates a total misunderstanding of the purpose of the so-called six and five program. Often the Hon. Member who just spoke from the New Democratic Party, as well as the Hon. Member for Okanagan