

Old Age Security Act Amendment

• (4:40 p.m.)

Once more, I blame the government for that situation. I have done so perhaps ten, fifteen times already. But I must continue to do so until we get that parliamentary committee which is essential and urgently required, so that the various governments can set up their respective administrations firmly, clearly and in harmony. I do hope we obtain it on the occasion of the Centennial which is an appropriate time to create and encourage national harmony and brotherhood.

A province that decides to legislate on old age pensions, according to the 1951 amendment I read to you a while ago, has priority and, to my mind, the exclusive right to do so within its boundaries, by virtue of federal balance and the principle according to which a right must be coupled with the financial means to exercise it. Having a right is not all; we must also have the financial resources, the pile of dollars necessary to make good that right, to exercise it. Ottawa must thus grant such a province unconditional fiscal compensation.

Ottawa's right to legislate with respect to old age pensions is but temporary and supplementary, that is to say as long as a province does not legislate. In this case as in other cases, Ottawa wishes to justify its control by pointing out that old age pension payments have economic repercussions. In fact, government officials have claimed that an automatic pension increase to \$100 per month was equivalent to putting into circulation a large amount of money, and that it was not appropriate to do this in times of inflation, and that such action would bring about economic and inflationary results. This is a very superficial and childish objection, since all payments and all expenditures of the various governments have economic repercussions.

This government's argument just shows that the provinces also have a great part to play in the economic and financial orientation of the country, since the payments they make and the expenditures which they incur also have economic implications. Old age pensions, like old age assistance, public assistance, medical assistance, medicare, the Canada pension plan and other social measures, must be part of an over-all social security program. The rules of co-ordination, economy, efficiency and environment make this a necessity. This is why the provinces have every constitutional, social, and administrative reason to take action in all social security fields. In this

[Mr. Allard.]

connection, I would like to quote the conclusion to an article written by Mr. Paul Sauriol, in today's editorial page of *Le Devoir*. I quote:

The province of Quebec which operates its own pension plan, is therefore right in wanting to recuperate old age pensions in full, as provided by the Canadian constitution; all elements of social security must be a part of a well integrated and co-ordinated plan; they must not come under various authorities; this applies to pensions for the invalid and the handicapped, and to all classes of people depending on community support.

Mr. Speaker, if Ottawa is panic-stricken on account of the decision taken by one or many provinces to occupy the whole field of old age pensions, I believe it is the first responsible, on account of its systematic refusal to revise the constitution and institute a joint parliamentary committee on taxation and constitutional reforms.

Therefore, according to these remarks, which are derived from a study of this bill, I do not only feel that it lacks generosity, that it denies the equal right of all older citizens to receive the old age pension, a right that was sanctioned at the time the act was passed in 1951, a universal character that we find embodied, in the medical care legislation, but I think this bill, runs against provincial prerogatives and upsets them, provides no tax arrangements and wants precisely to probe indirectly into the old age assistance field as regards needy people, without any previous consultation with the provinces.

And that is the reason why I move, seconded by the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) that:

This house, while of the opinion that necessary steps should be taken to secure for the senior citizens of Canada an adequate pension, also believes nevertheless that no legislation providing for an old age security service in Canada would be sufficient unless it provides for a tax compensation system for any province wishing to establish its own autonomous old age security plan.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard), following the speech he has just made, proposed a motion which I have here. The hon. member says that, at this stage of the proceedings, he can move an amendment to the motion which is now before the house, but the proposal which he suggests at this time is not an amendment but a substantive motion and, for that reason, it cannot be accepted.

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I thought that you were asking for the