

Old Age Security

service. She is looking after her husband in the way of providing meals and the other services the wife ordinarily takes care of. However, in many cases she also performs the medical services he needs. She acts as a nurse and supervisor in respect of a whole host of things which otherwise the state would be compelled to provide.

Such a woman should be paid for the type of services she performs. If she were not there society would have to pay for people to do the work she is doing. The very least we could do is to see that there is a pension for her as well as for her husband, regardless of the fact that she is still under the eligible age. I hope we can do this.

I detected on the faces of some people yesterday, when my colleague was pointing out that the amount of the pension should now be \$200, a few incredulous smiles and some looks of complete despair. They seemed to be asking where this is going to end. At the present time there can be no end because we are just carrying out an exercise of pouring water through a sieve. We raise the pensions of elderly people, we raise the pensions of the veterans, and we have a bill to raise the pensions of some public servants. Many other changes come along and all the time we are pouring water through a sieve, because by the time the old age pensioner receives the envelope containing his first pension adjustment, which will come in October, the people in the supermarkets, the landlords and the other forces in the community who have the means of life at their command will take away that increase from the older people.

This is the way it is all along the line. I believe it is high time that we faced up to the fact that there is not very much use in giving all these pension increases if as soon as we give them they are taken away. We are now making provision for the subsidization of bread and milk, and there is some moral suasion to have the price of furnace oil kept within bounds. I suggest, however, that these things are not enough. I have heard across this country—and not only in socialist or NDP circles—a growing clamour that those items of food which relate to nutrition and diet ought to be taken out of the profit distributive system.

● (1610)

I am beginning to hear this, not only on hot lines but in serious discussions on the radio and on television. After all, we will have to come to it some day. We came to it years ago in the matter of water. Water is one of the essentials of life and yet none of us worry or lie awake at night tossing in our beds for fear the price of water will go up tomorrow or for fear that one of the firms handling water will beat the others to the punch, raise the price and make the others raise their price too. None of us worries for fear water will become adulterated. We worry plenty about pollution, but that is another matter. None of us fears that additives will be put into the water to make it look more attractive or to make it sell better so that some particular firm can get ahead. It is this kind of nonsense that is wrecking our attempt to provide security through pensions, this kind of nonsense applied to essential foods.

Bread, butter, milk and protein foods such as meat, cheese, eggs and fish are foods which today are being gambled with, just the way people gamble on horses at the exhibition. I tell you frankly that until we as members of

parliament start to grapple with the problem of how we can take away these main elements of food from the people who gamble with them—and they are gambled with from the beginning of the food chain, the time when the freight people first get the foods until they reach the supermarket—we will find that our efforts in helping to provide security for the senior citizens and other people will be frustrated. We must find ways and means of achieving a solution to that.

I have been to the supermarkets more frequently in the last while and have found that they have become places of tragedy. I have watched elderly people and harrassed mothers with two or three children clinging to the buggy and following her as she went around the supermarket. I have watched the hopeful expressions on their faces. They do not look at T-bone steaks and other expensive cuts of meat. They look at hamburger, weiners and other small amounts of meat while their faces become longer and longer and they become more desperate, realizing that they can no longer afford those things which are essential and always have been essential.

Until we can provide enough elements of a good core diet for the old people and for families with small children, people on low incomes, we will not be able to resolve this situation and provide the necessary security for older people and in fact for people of any age. I want to say that this is part of the whole problem of social security in this country. That is why I bring it here, without apologies, when speaking on this bill, because it is closely related to it.

This bill will provide a certain increase for older people. The increase is small enough but there are quarterly upward revisions. To be able to keep those upward revisions we must adopt measures in other areas. Let us consider the matter of rents. I wish we could find somebody, perhaps another minister or perhaps even the same minister, who could talk to the relevant ministers in the provinces. In this case it should be the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford), but so far he has not shown much realization of the fact that people on low incomes or even lower middle incomes simply cannot afford either to buy or rent housing at today's prices. What must be done is for a minister of this government to discuss with the provinces the matter of pulling housing costs into an acceptable price range and holding them there. I think we will have to tackle the important matter of rents. Leadership must begin from here. The provinces have already said—and I have not heard it mentioned here too often—that they are willing to co-operate in the putting into effect of any measures that this government can devise for coping with inflation. I think it is high time that the federal government devised some measure to look after the housing needs of Canadians and to keep the whole price range of new homes within the purchasing power of the middle and lower income people. This cannot be done without lowering interest charges for buyers and without assisting the provinces to work out workable rental legislation which will hold the rents steady.

Mention was made by the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) of the need to provide free drugs for elderly people under medicare. I will do a little trumpet blowing for a few minutes. Some of you may not have