

Old Age Security Act Amendment

the legislation before us in its present form contains any guarantee that the pensioners will be in a better position once it is passed.

There is a further ground for objection. We do not approve of the ceiling which is placed on these bits of earned income. I have been in many pensioners' homes in my own riding where people are covering up bits of income which they must have in order to live, prices being what they are today. While this legislation does make things a little easier, it still fails to remove a direct invitation to desperate people to conceal their earnings, or part of them. This is what these people fear tremendously, that they will be smoked out by this new legislation, through tribunals, so that their secret socks will be discovered under the mattress or wherever they are kept. This is why we object to the legislation; it is discriminatory and its terms make it almost impossible for pensioners to lead a straight, upright existence.

I invite hon. members to listen to what one old lady told me. She had, she said, always lived an honest life, yet in order to make ends meet today she had been obliged to take in a lodger under the pretense that he was her son. A pretense of this sort should not be necessary. There should be no such ceiling as this bill imposes. We talk a good deal in this house about encouraging initiative. We certainly encourage the initiative of people like Weston. There is a lot of encouragement for people like him. But let an old age pensioner try to keep a boarder, or do something like that, and we soon find out how much room there is for initiative on her part.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): I realize that some hon. members are far more interested in protecting people in a higher income range. But I am interested in those people who have only their pensions and, possibly, a little more. I believe that those of us who are in a position to do so should be glad to pay a little more for such things as old age security schemes in order that those who are worse off may not have to pay as much.

The minister has quoted the Canadian welfare council as approving what he is doing. Well, if he quotes more flattering notices from the welfare council, he will get more of the other kind from us on this side of the house. The welfare council is appreciative of what he is trying to do but there are many social workers who do not go all the way with this legislation. On November 15 Mr. Reuben C.

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway).]

Baetz, Executive Director of the welfare council announced a new study of the budgeting problems of low-income Canadians. This is to cost \$100,000 toward which the federal government is making a grant. He says:

If the high cost of living is working hardship on the average middle-class consumer today, what is it doing to the poor? Studies show that the poor pay more for goods and services at the best of times; and as prices rise their suffering increases. The low-income groups that are especially hard hit are large families, families in which the mother is the sole support, and people on fixed incomes, such as the aged. The spending patterns of these groups, in particular, will be studied.

That is from a communiqué of the Canadian Welfare Council. On the next page Mr. Baetz is quoted as saying:

Up to now, decisions on benefits have been determined by a combination of political expediency, financial limitations, and rough estimates of need.

I wish the minister were here to listen to this.

An hon. Member: He is right here.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): He is misplaced.

For example, the federal government's program for a guaranteed minimum income for the aged is being launched without a thorough study of minimum needs, as was recommended by the special committee of the Senate on aging.

Did the minister hear that? I will repeat it.

The federal government's program for a guaranteed minimum income for the aged is being launched without a thorough study of minimum needs, as was recommended by the special committee of the Senate on aging.

This is a scattergun or stopgap measure, and the minister knows it because he has indicated a number of times that these provisions are of a temporary nature.

I need not stop with the welfare council. The government's own special planning secretariat, in a report put out earlier this year, referred to the intense and widespread poverty of the aged. I wish to read a little from this report.

It is well known that poverty amongst the aged is particularly intense. While about five per cent of all Canadians receive public assistance in the course of a year, 21 per cent of all Canadians aged 65-69 have consistently received old age assistance.

In other words, over one fifth of all Canadians aged 65-69 have been on relief.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Then, I should like to go a little further. The minister wishes to phase out this old age security legislation. He called it temporary because he wants to phase it out when the