

Old Age Security Act Amendment

of Canada. That does not prevent our criticizing and exposing the weakness and hypocrisy of the government's stand.

The minister opened his remarks tonight with some extraordinary words. He said that on third reading the house stands eyeball to eyeball with the bill. They are rather odd words for a minister introducing a pet project. It reminds me of nothing more than a myopic individual who cannot see the print that is before him because he has left off his spectacles. So the minister stands eyeball to eyeball with his bill, the victim of the dictates of the Minister of Finance and the reactionary wing of the Liberal cabinet, and because he cannot see the weaknesses of his bill he keeps it close to his face and defends it. Eyeball to eyeball, indeed. The minister does not dare stand eyeball to eyeball with the old age pensioners of Canada.

The minister describes the criticism of the bill, in language of personal affront, as having been hand-wringing and haranguing. Seldom have I listened to more roaring and ranting than was indulged in by the Minister of National Health and Welfare this evening. He read us some letters.

Mr. MacEachen: One letter.

Mr. Fulton: He read a carefully selected expression from one letter he has received.

Mr. Churchill: He wrote it himself.

Mr. Fulton: In that letter appeared the phrase that this is the only legislation where "the poor gets more and the rich gets nothing." The minister said that is a characteristic description of this legislation. What about last night's budget? Are the poor getting more and the rich getting nothing? Who is going to pay the one per cent increase in sales tax? The minister, with tears in his eyes, tells us he is trying to help the old age pensioner. The person who has nothing but his old age pension to live on will have to pay. What about the 2 per cent increase in the cost of living because of the budget introduced last night by the minister's colleague? What about that for hypocrisy? The poor will not only have to pay the cost of this proposal but they will be subject to the greatest extension of snooping by super-duper snoopers in the history of this country. Their affairs will be pried into; their confidential returns will be exposed to the gaze of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, and possibly to the courts in the course of prosecution.

[Mr. Fulton.]

• (9:50 p.m.)

What about the number of questions in connection with the legislation to which answers have not been provided? What about old age pensioners in the province of Quebec? Not once have we had an answer from the government on that very important question. We still have some time left on third reading and I hope that the Minister of National Health and Welfare will direct his attention to some of the real problems in connection with the legislation instead of skirting around the edges as he has done in the debate so far, because these are not hypothetical questions.

I now address my remarks to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson), the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) and the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) because the Minister of National Health and Welfare could not be less interested in the discussion of his own bill.

What about the position of the old age pensioner who is a taxpayer in Quebec? Notice was served upon us that the government of Quebec intends to take over the administration of the old age pension system in that province. Let me ask the Minister of Labour, who is a responsible and serious-minded minister although his colleague the Minister of National Health and Welfare is not, what will be the position of the taxpayer in Quebec when the government moves into the field of old age pensions because a tax measure was imposed by the Minister of Finance of Canada?

Has the government addressed its mind to this question? The Minister of Labour is silent, which shows that obviously it has not. The Minister of Transport is silent and so are the Ministers of National Defence and of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Not one of these great wizards opposite has thought about the implications of the measure which they are presenting to the House of Commons. Will they give us an answer? Their silence is an eloquent tribute to the lack of thought on the part of the government.

What about a bill which penalizes the principle of thrift? The Minister of National Health and Welfare talks glibly about a guaranteed income program, but what does it mean? Has he defined it? Has he said anything which will convince us otherwise than that it may mean in many cases a concession to mediocrity because it penalizes thrift?

There are many people in need of a guaranteed and stabilized income, but why should those who have observed the principles of