

*Old Age Security Act*

and qualify for full escalation in line with any cost of living increases. Thank God this argument is factually correct, that it does provide a cushion. However, as an argument it is not good enough, because it misreads human nature in one crucial aspect.

Many thousands of our senior citizens are proud of the fact that they can still stand on their own feet, that they have salted away something for their old age and do not have to be a burden on anyone. The law of the land states that they are entitled to a basic old age pension which Parliament, in its wisdom, has now set at \$80 a month. It is not good enough to simply state that, if we have miscalculated or if inflation catches up with us, these people can apply for the supplement. This is a degrading thought-process for them. It would be degrading in their view because it would mean that their plans had failed. If we let inflation get away from us again, it will be our fault. However, it will be the senior citizens who will feel they made a mess of things for they will be the ones who will have to apply for assistance in the management of their lives. They will have to come on their hands and knees, so to speak, to fill out forms; something they never thought they would have to do.

Although I think this is a good bill, there is one inconsistency embodied in it. We have one department or government approaching the problem of unemployment with a direct acknowledgment that the citizens of this country as a whole will have to pay for an unemployment scheme if unemployment reaches an average figure above a stated minimum. This implies that the citizens of this country have the responsibility to help the unemployed if the unemployment level reaches a certain limit. I agree with that concept. Also, we have a section of the Department of National Health and Welfare stating that if something goes wrong in the area of living costs, the citizens of this country as a whole will have to pay whatever additional amounts are required to keep those entitled to the guaranteed supplement from falling too far behind. I also agree with that principle. But, here, on the other hand, we have another section of the same department stating that the basic floor guaranteed to all old people in Canada can be left on its own to slide down to meaningless levels as a result of the same inflationary process.

Yet the complete package is good, even though there is an inconsistency which I find difficult to understand. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) stated that the bill is inconsistent in principle. I do not agree, I think the principle is consistent throughout, although there is this one inconsistency.

**Mr. Orlikow:** That is like being slightly pregnant.

**Mr. Osler:** Keep quiet and you will learn something. I cannot support any amending motion or arguments dealing with this bill at this time. The minister must have support, because the measures contained in it will significantly benefit millions of Canadians. The minister stated that Parliament can change the \$80 basic pension any time it wants. I beseech him to speak to his colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), before the next budget is brought down, to propose to him that funds be made available for the coming fiscal year, funds that will

[Mr. Osler.]

enable us to build an escalation into the basic pension, thereby allowing the people of this country to help all those old age pensioners who may be affected by inflation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf):** Mr. Speaker, the House is now considering Bill C-202, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act.

In introducing this bill, the government has shown once more its willingness to extend its public support of exploiters under the pretext of a fight against inflation.

This piece of legislation is more disturbing than it is impressive. Actually, it is just another repetition of the government's endless tactics to maintain its police action in order that the minimum assistance provided by law to old people is not exceeded. I am sure, however, that in our police state there are still people who have their fun.

I have in mind the officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare who commissioned this Bill C-202. I am thinking also of the people who wrote this bill. In my opinion, the ones who were required to prepare the main part of it and whose fun is not over yet, are the C.A.'s, I mean the "congenial accountants".

Imagine that in the course of their work these very clever people succeeded in splitting the Canadian cent. In clause 3(1) we read:

Subject to the provisions of this Act and the regulations, a monthly pension—may be paid to every person who—

In fact, this clause is proposing an increase of \$5.04 a year, or 42 cents a month, or 1.4 cent a day. Everyone who knows that it takes 100 cents to make a dollar will agree, I presume, that this is a master stroke.

In the white paper on income security for Canadians, page 15, we read:

The government considers that additional measures for the alleviation of poverty should be instituted as soon as possible as a first step in a well-defined and unified conceptual approach that will lead in time to the provision of a decent measure of security for all people.

Mr. Speaker, an increase of 1.4 cents a day as a first step is no great shakes. If this government considers the present bill as a first step, they just cannot miss. But obviously an increase of 1.4 cents in favour of elderly citizens represented the most effective measure to subject them to rationing and to insure all of them a decent security level.

It must be admitted that this bill does reflect the recommendations of the white paper on income security. No mistake can possibly be made. This is a long-term program which is far from satisfactory. By the way, we are considering a bill respecting senior citizens who contributed in developing this country, brought the land into cultivation, constructed railways, highways, plants and schools. They had to go through economic crises and wars which claimed sometimes the lives of some of their relatives, for all of which the government claims to be showing its gratitude by introducing Bill C-202, whereas all the legislation purports is an increase of 1.4 cents per day in their pension.