

Not so long ago, I was impressed when reading the following:

Our production system must therefore be geared to production of goods which will meet, first of all, the elementary needs of mankind, then the secondary needs, and finally those needs which come into the class of affluence and luxury.

It can hardly be suggested that the increase the government is proposing is going over that level to fit into the luxury level. Definitely not! Still it is possible to do more, taking into account the capacity to produce. Now, legislation is passed to increase pensions gradually according to the development of our country and we expect the government to do it. Were we to reduce our demands, we would be unfair to our senior citizens.

In my opinion, increasing old age security pensions only to keep them in line with the ever increasing cost of living would not be enough because with higher standards of living resulting from increased productivity, our old people should be allowed to benefit from this situation to the same extent as all other Canadians.

This is what we call the heritage of a nation. Our senior citizens have all contributed to this national wealth. They strove to produce wealth so that they could benefit from their work in their older days.

Some people say sometimes that it is annoying to pay taxes in order to support older people. Why did they not save money when they were working, so as to be able to provide for themselves? But these people are not to be blamed, for they were overtaxed all their lives and squeezed for interest charged by the comptroller of credit that belongs to the nation.

Some people who cashed in on the nation's credit were rewarded in the form of interest from the taxes paid by Canadians. It is no wonder then that most older people are in a difficult situation and did not succeed in saving money to enable them to live decently for the later years of their lives.

This is the pattern we keep on fighting. However, we do progress. We see from one day to the other that we can do better, that certain changes are in order, but progress does not come about fast enough. The events overwhelm us and we have the situation which prevails now in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I should hope that the minister will prove not charitable but just in the means test and that if through errors in the implementation of the new plan, some Canadians receive a few dollars to which they are not duly entitled under the law, they will not be treated too harshly.

Without there being dishonesty on the part of pensioners, due to misunderstood answers or questions while completing forms, it happens sometimes after two, three or four years, that the department finds out it has paid too much money. The old people must then pay it back at a time when their income has never been so low. A certain amount of money is deducted from their pension cheques and they are put in a difficult position. It is inhuman.

Old Age Security Act

This is why I would like to ask the minister to tell his officials not to be too harsh so that in such cases the old people do not become even more miserable than they were.

As I said at the beginning, Mr. Speaker, we intend to support this legislation but we also want to make some suggestions and to bring in amendments. We do not feel that this is the last pension increase. We hope that the Old Age Security Act will be amended again so as to grant a justified increase of pension.

For the next eight, ten or fifteen years, it will be impossible for anyone to run in an election by telling older people: We have raised your pension by 42 cents a month and we have slightly adjusted your guaranteed income supplement, it was a gift. More honesty is needed. Right after this bill is passed, we should keep considering the old age security situation with a view to bringing it in line with our productive capacities so that our senior citizens will be able to live many more wonderful years in a Canada they helped to build for us.

For these reasons, and because we are still in the prime of life, we wish the government would do even more so that it can be said everywhere that in Canada people live on more than just memories. They live on gratitude and material goods. We must ensure that it will be said that Canadians realize that God has not put on our territory so much wealth in order to accumulate it to create misery, but to have this wealth distributed among Canadians. We must ensure that nobody will think any longer that it is necessary to live in misery in the midst of plenty.

• (5:10 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Steven Otto (York East): I do not know whether it was the anticipation of my speech or the Social Credit philosophy we have just heard which so quickly emptied this chamber, but I hope that before I am through I shall not be addressing just you, Mr. Speaker; I see the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) nodding his head and I am glad of this assurance that he will be here for a while.

I do not intend to deal, now, with specific figures or to indulge in the hair-splitting evident in the remarks of the NDP spokesmen and, to some extent, in those of the spokesmen for the Official Opposition; I believe we should keep this sort of thing for the committee. After all, the result of second reading will be to get the bill into committee. I propose to deal with the general principles embodied in this measure and with the position of the parties opposite in relation to those principles.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said he would like to see a liberal bill. Then, he went on to say he would like to see a liberal bill like the one brought in during 1951 or 1952. I can tell him that Liberal bills do not go back to 1952, 1910 or 1912. All the legislation we have is forward-looking legislation. If he wants to go back to 1914 it indicates the direction the New Democratic Party is taking, not the Liberal party, and he should know this. I have listened time and time again to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.