

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

Taking \$900 away from these people means perhaps the loss of little gifts that they were going to give to their grandchildren or special meals they were going to prepare for themselves, or perhaps some clothing, something for their apartment, their rental dwelling or for the home they live in. It is not really very much money when Members of Parliament are talking about it, but when I speak to the elderly and I read the mail coming in from the elderly to my office, it is a question of trust. It has been a very painful experience for them to see the Government squandering money to big business. Big business, Mr. Speaker, as Liberal Members opposite know, owes right now legal taxes that they are supposed to pay comparable to our existing deficit. Is the Government attempting to collect that money from big business? Not likely.

It is unfortunate at this point in the debate that the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is not here, but I took the time to read some of the debates that he was involved in, going back more than 30 years, and the fight that was put up by Members such as the Member for Winnipeg North Centre and others in this House that brought forward in 1951 the first real kind of pension program that we had in this country. We have been fighting ever since to get away from the concept of means tests.

Mr. Speaker, a pension in this country is a right. The Government is tampering with that right and Members are saying there is no written contract and so on. It is a right, and a trust to the elderly in this country has been broken. I feel ashamed for any Member who would get up and vote for Bill C-131 in this House.

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East-Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, it is also a sad day for me to rise and speak on the amendment and to Bill C-131.

The amendment is a worthy one and I want to make it clear that we will be supporting it because at the end it states that the Guaranteed Income Supplement will be added on to the Old Age Security benefit. So therefore, those who qualified for the Guaranteed Income Supplement would in fact, be indexed. It is a very small token, and we do not agree with the six and five concept.

I want to speak for a moment about the comments made by the Hon. Member for Manicouagan (Mr. Maltais). He said the Liberal Government is sympathetic to our senior citizens, yet not one of their Members is getting up and telling the real story here. I want to tell that Hon. Member how sympathetic they are in my riding, where senior citizens come up to the railway station and try to get on the VIA Rail passenger train. There is no accommodation available for them, although they have actually booked on that train. When they get to the station they find that the Government, through its program of cutbacks and so on, has not enough equipment on the train, so they cannot board the train. The Government has abandoned lines in many parts of Canada which senior citizens helped to build, yet those are the very kinds of travelling systems that our senior citizens need and desire. Is that being sympathetic to these people?

For a moment, if I may, I would like to revert to the original Bill that caused all these problems, Bill C-124. The Hon. Member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling) has indicated—

[Translation]

Mr. Maltais: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Maltais) on a point of order.

Mr. Maltais: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to point out that the remarks made earlier by the Hon. Member do not reflect at all what I said. If he wants to quote me, I would urge him to read the blues. That would be much easier than speaking off the top of his head in the House.

[English]

Mr. Parker: Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from the "Budget in Brief" of June, 1982 which caused this problem. For the Hon. Member for Parry Sound-Muskoka to say that the Conservative Party agrees with the six and five program for working people in the public service sector but he does not agree, and his Party does not agree, with Government policy on Old Age Security pensions, Family Allowances or Public Service pensions, I think is being very, very misrepresentative as to what happened. The "Budget in Brief" states very clearly, and I quote:

Public sector compensation restraint program will constrain rates of pay of federal government employees to increases of no more than 6 per cent in the first year; no more than 5 per cent in the next year.

This will create a savings of about \$250 million the first year and \$550 million the next year. The Conservatives supported that program. I know the Conservatives have a problem counting, but I did not realize they had a problem reading, because if they had gone on a little bit further they would have seen this:

A 6 per cent limit on increases in indexed social payments... comes into effect with the January, 1983 increases; stays in effect for two years—

Very clear. The next page applies to Family Allowances, to people receiving Public Service pensions or old age pensions, but does not affect people who receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement. It gives a very clear indication of what the Government was going to do. At the bottom of the page it says:

It will generate \$45 million this year and \$315 million next year for reallocation.

It does not say anything about inflation. It says that the Government is going to take this money from these programs and reallocate it. I would like to ask the Government, when it is taking this money from senior citizens, from children and Public Service people who are on retirement, and it is going to reallocate it, does that mean it is giving it to the railways? Does that mean it is giving it to Dome Petroleum? Because if that is what the Government is doing, I think it is a sin and does not show very much sympathy from that side of the House.