

Much could be said on this question and on the other consequences of a financial system that proves dictatorial when it should be a servant. The system has become a mechanical device and a robbing scheme when it should liberate men and distribute the benefits of progress. It engenders and promotes laxity among men instead of brotherhood and generosity that could shine in this world where physical hindrances have almost disappeared.

In such deprivation can always be found impoverished families, dispossessed small businessmen, important industries buried or swallowed by the monsters to which austerity gave the occasion to extend their tentacles and increase their power. Such monsters will enjoy the government's favour as large job providers. While they welcome workers from all quarters, cities and rural areas, on the other hand, they make them into robots, at the service of Mammon.

Mr. Speaker, I could give many more details on the basic question of old age pensions, and even if all the hon. members who spoke on this measure have explained the pension terms, the methods of payment and the amount to be paid, I still submit that we should get rid of the deceiving and anti-democratic system of the guaranteed income subject to a means test.

Gailbraith, an economist, had this to say on the matter:

Today, we ensure an income to the have-nots, but through various means that are costly in their application and an outrage to human dignity.

Indeed, we insult our older citizens through inquiries to find out whether or not they are entitled to this or that.

Whenever someone has put something aside, there are some people who say: he is better off than I am, he is not entitled to that for I have nothing.

This is discrimination, Mr. Speaker, and in 1966, the Chamber of Commerce of the United States organized a forum on the best methods of providing a decent standard of living for everyone. Robert Théobald, James Tobin, Milton Friedman, all of them economic advisers, approved the principle of guaranteed income and negative tax, on which I should like to say a few words.

We should have enough sense, once the inquiries to find out whether older people need assistance are abolished, to determine a decent tax basis, so as to leave our older people with what they need to live decently.

The Ontario Labour Association, in a brief submitted on February 28, 1967, to the Special Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Consumer Credit, No. 39, shows that we have taken the wrong road. Inquiries on old age security should be done away with. We should be able to ensure old people of easy circumstances in a country bursting with wealth.

● (9:10 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to say a very few words in support of the amendments proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I take this opportunity to commend him on his appeal

Old Age Security Act

today on behalf of the aged citizens of this country. I also commend my colleague, the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) who placed before the government a realistic assessment of the weaknesses in the bill before us.

The lack of human consideration by this government for the segment of society that falls in this category, as well as for other disadvantaged Canadians, becomes more and more obvious each day, Mr. Speaker. I refer to the blind, the disabled, the mentally retarded and others whom they help by lip service and to whom they throw a few pennies. In this case it is 42 pennies, to be exact. That is how much they have thrown these people out of the government's protective coffers. And, Mr. Speaker, it is ever more difficult for me to realize how they can continue, in conscience, to camouflage this attitude from most Canadians.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the overflow in government offices of experts who advise on the passing of what is supposed to be just legislation, there remain many weaknesses. This legislation exemplifies nothing but sheer, automatic consideration of disadvantaged Canadians as numbers, or holes in a punch-card, rather than as humans to whom we as a state owe at least some responsibility—the responsibility for their care; that they may continue to live in a reasonable state of existence in their remaining years.

One important segment of our senior citizens whom they have forgotten, Mr. Speaker, is the aged pensioner who suffers from exceptional incapacity. I am referring to that group of citizens who in their thousands are either left alone or suffer from a degree of disability which is such that they are unable to look after themselves. I can tell the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and others in this House that I, too, have been getting many letters indicating disappointment, frustration, disillusionment, bewilderment and lack of faith in those who govern.

Let me quote an example of what I mean by those who are suffering from exceptional incapacities, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of months ago I visited a lady 70 years of age who was blind, who had just had her second leg removed and who was suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure. Her husband, who was a war veteran, left her with a small widow's pension under the War Veterans Allowance Act. Because she was alone, she left her deteriorated home and, luckily, was able to move in next door with her son, who was also blind. He had eight children and was existing on social assistance. His wife has to try to take care of his mother. This lady's income, with old age security, totalled \$111.41, plus her \$40. The son borrowed \$600 to repair the home. He rented it out, which meant that the rental income was eventually charged against the mother's income, which was reduced by a like amount. Luckily, I visited this lady and brought the case to the attention of the authorities. She is now getting a few more dollars because she happens to be blind.

The regulations do not make allowances for those suffering from exceptional incapacity such as in the case I