

Old Age Security Act

want the government to recognize this problem and correct it.

• (1510)

These are the only two observations I wish to make. I welcome the improvement. However, I do not think the base has been established in any firm way: I think it has just been pulled out of the air, which leaves it open to more politicking. Perhaps the next study will tie the base to the poverty line or a little above it. Now that the government is suggesting it is being improved and taken out of the political ring, I think we should have a sound base. The established poverty line or a little above it seems to be the most sensible base.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a few comments on Bill C-207. In general, I welcome the amendments to the Old Age Security Act. In my constituency there are over 8,000 pensioners. I receive a lot of mail and many representations from them. In the past, pensions have been far from adequate. Many pensioners are living in poverty; their housing conditions are deplorable. This bill recognizes the need to help these people. I wish legislation of this type had been introduced into the House several years ago; I feel it is late now.

I wish to make two points which I hope the minister will take into consideration for future amendments to the legislation. We should be talking in terms of an early retirement for our older people. I receive many representations from people who want to retire at age 60, partly because of the problem of finding employment and partly because in an age of technology and cybernation there is less and less reason for people to work beyond age 60. I urge the minister to amend the Old Age Security Act and the Canada Pension Plan to allow people to retire at age 60 if they wish. Many citizens in this country would like us to move toward this goal now.

Second, the pension for senior citizens should be raised to \$150 per month. The basic pension of \$80 is much too low. I note that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) said that \$150 a month would be too costly. I disagree. I urge that the basic pension be raised to \$150 per month and that there be a cost of living escalator clause. I find it very encouraging that many pensioners in this country are now starting to organize pressure and lobby groups. There is the Pensioners for Action Now group in British Columbia, and a similar group in Saskatchewan. Some of the credit for pension improvements must go to these organizations. I encourage pensioners to organize and put pressure on the government in every way possible.

The money needed to raise pensions to a much higher rate is available. Other groups in our society receive these benefits. There are tax write-offs to corporations. Surely we can spend more money to help the old age pensioners of this country. They deserve it and should have it. I hope the minister considers these two very important matters and does something about them in the near future. I refer to the need for an earlier retirement age and a higher basic rate of pension.

[Mr. Peddle.]

[Translation]

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I shall speak briefly; I will just say a few words.

Not only shall I not condemn this government, but I shall congratulate it for having introduced this measure tending to increase the old age security payments. We know that this increase will be welcome, but it should have been granted a long time ago. In fact, we have been calling for it for several years and, a few months ago, we put considerable pressure on the authorities requesting that this increase be granted.

However, Mr. Speaker, why are pensions being increased? Because the cost of living is rising. Is this a valid reason?

At the present time, we are wondering, on the one hand, why the cost of living is increasing and, on the other hand, why the government is not doing anything to stop it.

The increase in pension will certainly be offset by the increase in the cost of living to such an extent that we shall have to start all over again within the next few months. Following this increase, our senior citizens will witness an increase in the cost of living, an increase in the rates of the homes in which they live, and will find themselves in the same old predicament.

Mr. Béchard: Why, then, increase the cost of living?

Mr. Latulippe: We are asking for a pension increase and a price adjustment.

If we could bring about a price adjustment and, thus, prevent an increase in the cost of living, the pensions would be justified and increasing the pensions would do a great service to the public.

Pensions are being increased but the cost of living is also rising. There is no solution to all that. We certainly agree with pension increases, but, at the same time, we deplore the increasing cost of living. The government must at all costs find a way to adjust prices through compensated discounts which could be deducted from the total surplus of national production.

National production will reach about one hundred billion dollars in the 1972-73 fiscal year, whereas consumption will be about sixty billion dollars. Production prices should be sixty billion dollars because, through a logical approach, the government could decrease prices and have the 100 billion dollars production sold for 60 billions. Through other methods, the government could also issue credits to provide or increase pensions which would keep the cost of living from increasing.

Mr. Speaker, we would avoid cost of living increases through price readjustments and a total readjustment of production and consumption. We could then achieve something. We could arrive at a certain level of stability that would allow products to be sold more easily, in increasing the purchasing power and at the same time price increases would be avoided.

In view of the present economic situation, we are all happy that our senior citizens will get an increase to the guaranteed income supplement. But they will be all the more unhappy to realize eventually that they do not profit