

*Old Age Security*

to all kinds of things. They have the clothes and they enjoy public transportation. Golden wedding anniversaries today are much more widely attended than they used to be because people can afford to get to them. We have made improvements. I am not only prepared to admit that, I assert it, and we have been able to do that to the extent we have practised the principle of universality.

● (1610)

I ask that this parliament continue that principle and that it do so along the lines I suggest in this motion; that is, that the basic amount of the pension be raised to a figure high enough that everybody gets more than is now being paid under both old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. I argue also that the age for that pension should be brought down to 60.

My motion refers not only to lowering the age for old age security but also to lowering the age in respect of the Canada Pension Plan. I attach to both of these pensions at age 60, and up to age 65, the requirement that a person be out of the labour market. That could be because of having left the labour market or of never having been in it. As hon. members are aware, I think this is a much better way to pay pensions at age 60 than what the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) will be proposing in a bill in which he will give it only to those between the ages of 60 and 65 who are spouses of one who is 65 or over. I think the time has come for the pension to be available on a voluntary basis to anyone at age 60 provided that person is out of the labour market.

Although life can be richly rewarding, we also know that life has become more difficult. The rat race in our industrial society today is such that many workers have great difficulty in trying to continue to age 65. I think one thing we could do that would most enhance life in later years is to permit people to retire when they are young enough to plan their future and their remaining years. That is the reason why in this motion I plead that there be a reduction of the age to 60 on a voluntary basis, and that it apply to both old age security and the Canada Pension Plan.

There is no point in telling a person he or she can receive the old age security at age 60 and expect that he or she will retire if they cannot pick up any other benefits which are available. If we can induce many people in this age group to retire this would incidentally open up many jobs for those who are younger and unemployed. So, I present the motion to the House this afternoon as earnestly as I can.

I suppose this motion epitomizes the type of thing I have worked on the hardest during the decades I have been in this place. I am aware of the needs of those in other age groups. I am very much aware that there is a move in the direction of having a guaranteed annual income to cover all our people. Indeed, I press for this to be done. I am aware of the arguments from the other side that if we are to start spending we should spend the money on the needs of single parents and people who cannot work. The difficulty, however, is that although we are told the money should be spent in this other place, it is not spent in either place.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

There is a whole broad spectrum about which we should be concerned, but I submit that our society is easily measured on the one hand in respect of what it does for our children and younger people, and on the other hand by what it does for our older people. I say we should take steps to make still better the life of the senior citizens in Canada and add to the glory that was Parliament's when it passed the Old Age Security Act in 1951, which became effective in 1952. Therefore I present this motion and hope that the House will agree with me, as I say in my motion, that the full benefits available to our people should be recognized as the established right of all our senior citizens.

**Mr. Frank Maine (Wellington):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). He has achieved a remarkable reputation in this House for fighting on behalf of Canada's old age pensioners. This motion is of interest to many Canadians, including the senior citizens of my constituency of Wellington.

At the very outset, Madam Speaker, I believe it is important to point out that the combination of old age security benefits and retirement pension now available to Canadians aged 65 and over, under the Canada Pension Plan and the Old Age Security Act, is one of the most advanced in the western world. These two acts form an integral part of the Canadian social security system. They enable millions of people to provide financially for themselves and their families during crucial periods, that is, when retirement arrives, when disability strikes, or when death takes away the breadwinner. It might be worthwhile taking a moment to consider the number of Canadians who are already receiving assistance under these acts.

Each month approximately half a million senior citizens and their families receive a benefit cheque under the Canada Pension Plan alone. In addition to this over 1.8 million Canadians, that is all long-standing residents of Canada 65 years of age and over, receive a monthly benefit under old age security. Of these over 1.1 million people receive a further payment each month under the guaranteed income supplement program.

This is a highly successful program which this motion proposes to change. In fact there are three parts to the hon. member's motion. The first advocates making old age security and Canada Pension Plan benefits available to all persons who retire at age 60. The second is aimed at increasing the benefits of the old age pension to \$200 a month and indexing them to the standard of living. The third calls for the elimination of any income or means test for receipt of guaranteed income supplements. I would like to consider each of these parts in turn to show why, at this point in time, it would be unwise to adopt this motion.

There are sound economic reasons for not undertaking the first proposal to increase the old age pension and Canada Pension Plan rolls to include all those who retire at age 60. First of all, retirement at age 60 would reduce the productivity of this country at the very time when it is most important that everything be done to keep production at as high a level as possible.

All too often we forget that workers between the ages of 60 and 65 possess skills which took many years to develop.