

federal government to assume its rightful share of the \$50 a month increase for those receiving the guaranteed income supplement.

Another problem that has been concerning us is whether the pension should be paid to spouses below the age of 65. I have seen quite a few examples of this problem in my province. When the husband retires, there is a drastic drop in income. If the wife is a dependent spouse, one who is not working, she receives no pension to help defray household expenses. Other civilized countries have this type of legislation. In the United Kingdom the retirement age for men is 65 and for women, 60. In Italy, the retirement age for men is 60 and for women, 55. I hope the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) is listening, because yesterday he told us we were light years ahead of every other civilized country. The retirement age in Poland is 65 for men and 60 for women. In Sweden, the forerunner of the social movement, both have to be 67; in the United States both 65 and in Denmark 67 for men and 62 for women.

We will not be breaking fresh ground if we give a pension to spouses at the age at which their husbands become entitled to a pension. There might be a floor established whereby the spouses could receive a pension at age 60 provided they are not working. Almost everyone who has anything to do with elderly people realizes the desperate straits they are in when a man retires and the income drops from an average of say \$700 a month to \$170.

Another area that should be looked at is providing federal help for elderly people who have to spend their last few years in extended care hospitals. This is a great problem in British Columbia. Quite a few people come to British Columbia from other provinces who eventually reach the stage where they need extended care hospitalization. This is generally paid out of their own pocket. Our new government has promised action on this, but it is not yet forthcoming. This is a very serious problem. They have a bit of ghoulish humour in Victoria; you are never allowed to die until you are broke. Nursing homes and extended care hospitals are a quick way of achieving this. An elderly person on an old age pension who is suddenly faced with a hospital bill of \$400 to \$600 a month that is going to continue for the rest of his life very quickly loses interest in carrying on.

I intend to vote for this bill. I would be glad to vote for it right now to get it moved along one stage. I wish the amount were larger.

An hon. Member: How much larger?

Mr. McKinnon: When we were estimating how much you people were willing to spend to stay in power, and how much pressure we thought the NDP could put on you, we thought it would be somewhere between \$115 and \$130. Our party would have voted for that had you introduced it. I would like to see the insulting increases of the past few years, 42 cents and \$2.88, avoided. I intend to vote for this bill and the sooner the better.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, when my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), raised the curtain of

Old Age Security Act

history yesterday and gave us a very thorough story of how old age pensions came to Canada, I thought it would not be necessary for any of us to refer to it again. However, some of what I have subsequently heard makes me realize that some of the things that were left out, even by my thorough colleague for Winnipeg North Centre, need to be said on the historical side before we go any further afield.

Both the Liberal and Conservative parties had been in office at various times since Confederation, but there was not a single piece of social security legislation on the statute books until the end of World War I. When the old age pension legislation was finally forced on the Liberal government of the day, it became the first piece of social security legislation on the statute books of this country. It is very significant that it did not get there as a result of the efforts of either the Liberal or Conservative administrations of the past.

Yesterday the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) stated that this was the largest increase that had ever been made in the old age pension. I am not very good at arithmetic, but in my opinion the best increase was the first pension that was ever paid, because going from nothing to \$20 in those days was really something. After all, this was done after many years of stalling, stalling, stalling on the part of both Liberal and Conservative governments. And pressure was exactly what was needed to get it in 1927. That is why we got it at that time and there is no need to worry about who is claiming credit for it; the record is there in *Hansard* of the day. Some of these people who spin fine fancies as to how it got there should just go back and look at the pages of *Hansard* and they would have no doubt as to how it all happened.

• (1500)

As a matter of fact, listening to the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon) throwing all kinds of unflattering remarks in our direction, I was quite entertained, because he went through the genealogy rapidly as to how the Progressive party faded out after 1921 and how some of them had faded out into the Senate—you would expect them to fade there—how others had faded out in the Liberal party—you would expect them to fade there—and how others had faded out in subsequent election contests, and you would expect them to fade there. But what he did not point out was that from all this there emerged an instrument of strength among men and women in this country who believed it was time that ordinary people in Canada, doing the ordinary work of farm, field, factory and household, stuck together to make a party of their own in order to get things done rather than having them just talked about.

If the hon. member for Victoria still has any doubts as to how old age pensions got onto the statute books, I would urge him to look back in *Hansard* and he will find out how the Right Hon. R. B. Bennett, who was the leader of the Conservative party at that time, turned to J. S. Woodsworth when the prime minister of the day, Mr. Mackenzie King, was bragging about how his administration put in old age pensions. Mr. Bennett turned to J. S. Woodsworth and said—these are his exact words—he was the man who forced this measure on a reluctant govern-