

Old Age Security Act Amendment

approach to social security that the government has introduced a guaranteed income plan for our old age pensioners.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Therefore, I was more than a little surprised at some of the resistance from the opposition to this enlightened approach to social security. I would have thought the opposition would welcome a guaranteed minimum income plan for old age pensioners. I am rather surprised also at the attempt in some quarters to associate this plan with a means test. It is quite obvious to anyone who studies the plan that this is quite a departure from what has been referred to as the means test. I have had the opportunity to discuss the matter at some length with many of the old age pensioners in my own constituency, and I have been able to explain to them the procedure that will be adopted under this plan. It is one that has received almost universal support from my constituents. Unfortunately, there still are a number of people in Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador who do not enjoy the same standard of living as those in the more heavily populated areas. There is, perhaps, more familiarity among certain groups with the full meaning of the means test. I am, therefore, pleased to note that this plan does not involve this approach.

I doubt, Mr. Speaker, if any other piece of legislation before this house has been of greater interest to the group which will benefit directly from this legislation, and I doubt if there are very many items of legislation which have been more in tune with the needs of those concerned. This supplement will, when passed by the house, provide for a guaranteed income of \$105 per month for those eligible for old age security. This amount will not be reduced if an old age pensioner owns his or her own home or receives a gift. This amount will not be reduced if an old age pensioner receives social assistance from municipal, provincial or federal government departments. This amount will not be reduced if an old age pensioner receives a disability pension either under workmen's compensation, under commercial insurance or under a war pension. This plan is able to provide more assistance for those who need it because it does not attempt to provide additional payments to those who already have a considerable income.

We all recognize that the money for these payments does not come from an endless source, and that additional money must in the long run come from additional taxation. It is,

therefore, far better to make this additional assistance available to those who need it and not incur the need for additional taxation by making payments to those who already have a sizeable income.

One of the many features of this legislation is that the supplement will be available to those eligible through filling out a simple form. This form will be simpler than the income tax form and will not require any information not presently provided on the application for old age security and on the income tax forms.

This government, while putting forward legislation to serve all persons eligible for old age security payments, is very aware that this group is made up of individuals and that the feelings and rights of the individuals are of prime consideration. You will, therefore, understand when I relate this legislation to my own riding of Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador, in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and to the people who are living within this riding. Individuals who are within this riding are perhaps not dissimilar from other individuals living throughout other parts of Canada.

This riding contains 142,000 square miles and has approximately 1,000 miles of coast line. It contains two major airports, a pulp and paper industry and a lumber industry. It has mines producing asbestos, copper, lead, zinc, silver and iron. It has many ports. It has a rapidly expanding hydro industry. It supports an active fishing industry and naturally has the municipal, medical and other services and businesses to support these industries.

The percentage of older people in the coastal fishing communities and in the older towns is higher than in the newer towns which have sprung up around the industrial areas. Therefore, the proportion of persons eligible for old age security and assistance is correspondingly higher. The younger people who make up a high percentage of the population in the industrial areas do have parents and grandparents living in many cases in other communities. I am sure that, while they are involved in the pressures of their new life, they are aware of the importance of this proposed legislation which will bring more comfort and security to the older people who are living in their family homes, either in the inland woodlands or surrounded by the rugged beauty and splendor of our Atlantic coast.

Our older people, who were the pioneers of some of our older industries, have seen towns