

*Old Age Security Act*

ships than a single person with a similar income? Why that person? Some 165,000 Canadians are in the same situation, their standards are identical, so why make a distinction? As far as the money is concerned, would he not agree that instead of spending \$36 million to change the colour of the uniforms of our—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart), but he knows very well that his questions ought to be directed to the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault), not to the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse). I take this opportunity to draw this to your attention, and give you a chance to "redirect" your questions if you wish. The Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault).

**Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques):** Mr. Speaker, I understood that the question was for me because I made the main speech. To reply to my colleague from Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart), I can obviously not speak for the Progressive Conservatives and tell the Hon. Member why they took such action. They tried to improve a program introduced by the previous Liberal Government. The spouse allowance is basically a Liberal initiative introduced by the previous administration. We are not blaming the Members opposite for taking a step in the right direction. The reason for our criticism is that they are not taking the second necessary step.

When introducing social legislation in this House, the Liberal Party of Canada never proposed discriminatory amendments and this is what is happening now. What we find objectionable in this bill, and this is why we are trying to improve it, is its discriminatory nature. Otherwise, we believe of course in giving money to widows and widowers, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Still on questions and comments? The Hon. Member for Gaspé (Mr. Marin).

• (1610)

**Mr. Marin:** Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting and enjoyable to listen to the comments made by the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault). These comments were all the more interesting since his speech seemed to deal more with the facts than with the circumstances. Naturally, like everyone else in this House, the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques is aware of the problems facing Canadian men and women between the ages of 60 and 65. He suggested, which I found interesting, a means to take what he called the second step. It would seem that this was not considered to be the best option by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp). However, it would be interesting to know whether or not when it is impossible to take two steps at the same time, it would be better to stand still. I believe that following the studies and initial consultations of the Conservative Government it was decided that it would be better to take a first step and do

something for widows and widowers between 60 and 65. Why that particular group? I could perhaps simply reply with a rhetorical question. It is perhaps because it was in the interests of justice to provide widows and widowers with some of the social benefits earned by their spouses during their lifetime.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Questions and comments are now over. The Hon. Member for Lotbinière (Mr. Tremblay).

**Mr. Maurice Tremblay (Lotbinière):** The Chair is very kind, and I am most grateful.

Mr. Speaker, it is of course with very great pleasure that I join previous Hon. Members in support of the proposal in Bill C-26 dealing with the spouse's allowance.

First I would like to remind the House that this is not really a new piece of legislation, but rather an amendment to an existing statute. Clearly, the Bill implements the policy outlined in the Throne Speech of November 5, 1984, by extending the spouse's allowance to all low-income widowers and widows aged 60 to 64, irrespective of the age at which their spouses deceased. Of course this proposal is aimed at improving the financial situation of a group of Canadian men and women who are specially vulnerable. It is estimated, as was said earlier, that some 85,000 people will benefit from it or, it is important to stress it, something like 72,000 widows and 13,000 widowers. Also, this group represents some 61 per cent of all widows and widowers in that age group.

For the fiscal year 1985-86, that measure will entail extra expenditures totalling \$190 million, and for 1986-87, that is a full fiscal year, totalling \$350 million. Most widows and widowers close to 65 years of age and not entitled to old age security pensions are in urgent need. This is a tremendous step forward, an improvement—and I stress the word—in the help provided to people nearing retirement age.

In the speeches that have been made today on this Bill, we have heard the Official Opposition yelling at what they chose to call discrimination. Mr. Speaker, clearly as the Government Party we have many lessons to learn. But for the Official Liberal Opposition to try to teach us lessons in that way, is going a bit too far! Talking about discrimination, apparently they are referring to the meaning in their dictionary. And to that same extent, not being in power but in opposition would also amount to discrimination. Or again, how else can one explain that the Act we are amending with this proposal needs to be amended? Was there discrimination before?

I would remind you that it was in 1979, under a Conservative Government, that the spouse's allowance program was amended in order that all widows in need should keep on getting the allowance until age 65. Mr. Speaker, they had every opportunity to get rid of that "discrimination" they are referring to. They are bringing the debate down to a level that