

**Mr. Gerry Weiner (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs):** 1. (a) \$5,062,373\*, (b) \$7,724,628\*, (c) \$7,822,065\*, (d) \$7,956,928\*.

\* Assessed Contribution.

2. (a) 2.18 per cent\*\*, (b) 3.11 per cent\*\*, (c) 2.83 per cent\*\*, (d) 2.66 per cent\*\*.

\*\* As a percentage of Canada's total assessed and voluntary contributions to the United Nations system.

[Translation]

**Mr. Dick:** I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**Mr. Speaker:** The questions as enumerated by the Parliamentary Secretary have been answered. Shall the remaining questions stand?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

#### MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Wednesday, February 6, consideration of the motion of Mr. Epp (Provencher) that Bill C-26, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

**Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, when I was interrupted at six o'clock two days ago, I had indicated my general support for this Bill, which provides pension help for a small group of senior citizens. I had also indicated my regret that the Government was not taking the opportunity to bring in a comprehensive pension reform package which would be somewhat in line with the Opposition Day last May when the present Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) condemned the Liberal Government for its failure to move on this question.

It is obvious in the Bill that the Conservatives, like the Liberals before them, are moving ahead by inches while the problem is moving ahead by country miles. We might think that the gradual reduction of pension age over the past few years is a sign that we are becoming a more humane and generous society, but that is far from the case. Our pensions are not keeping up with the basic changes in our society and in our economy. For example, in 1964 old age security provided seniors with 20 per cent of the average industrial wage. In 1983 that same old age security provided seniors with only 14 per cent of the average industrial wage. Today we have reached the situation in which over 50 per cent of our senior

### Old Age Security Act

citizens must depend upon the guaranteed income supplement to maintain an adequate income for their retirement years.

If we looked at the situation in an historical context, we would realize that it was not unusual for many people to work until the age of 70, or until they dropped, whichever came first. The retirement age has gradually dropped to the age of 65. The pension age followed that, rather than preceded it. Today the economic and job situation is radically different from what it was in the 1960s. That can only be highlighted by the unemployment statistics, about which our Party is concerned, that Statistics Canada released today.

Over the past two or three years the closure of several mills in my riding has displaced many workers who are in their late fifties or early sixties. The tragedy is not just that they are unemployed today and that they have very little hope of getting work in the future, but that they have no pension provisions which will tide them over until the time when old age security will be made available to them.

Last month a constituent wrote to me. His letter bothered me because the kind of questions which he asked are questions for which there are no answers in the present situation. The man was laid off last July and sees little hope for ever again obtaining work. He pointed out that over the last 20 years he has worked in a number of different industries in western Canada and that he was involved in different pension arrangements in which he either made contributions or had contributions made on his behalf. However, he was never in any of those jobs long enough for his contributions to be vested. That is a pattern which is typical of many workers in the construction, logging and similar industries. His last job was in the woodworking industry, but the woodworking pension requires eight years of service before a worker's contributions can be vested. That constituent had worked in the industry for approximately seven years. He now finds himself completely out of luck and is understandably bitter. His letter reads:

Some fat cat who has been fortunate enough to work steady will now reap the benefit of the hours I have contributed into the fund, while myself and the many others in similar positions can look forward to nothing but a penurious old age embittered by the knowledge that others are reaping the benefits of our labour.

Apart from the fact that he looks upon some of his fellow workers as "fat cats" simply because they will be able to qualify for the pension, I am in complete agreement with what he has written. There is an element of unfairness in which workers pay into pension plans for a number of years and then, through no fault of their own, are laid off and their contributions are returned to them but they do not receive the benefit of the employer's contribution. Of course, that is by no means unique to woodworkers or others in my riding.

Cases such as this led the former Member for Nanaimo-Alberni, Mr. Ted Miller, to issue a minority report of the Task Force on Pension Reform. In that report he listed some of the shortcomings of occupational pension plans. His report indicated that only half of the men and fewer than one-third of the women in the paid workforce were covered by such plans, and that when people changed jobs it was difficult to maintain coverage because of the long vesting periods and the general