

Old Age Security

Mr. Anderson: My apologies, I should have said the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson). If the hon. member is putting this forward, as did his colleague for Regina East today, in a serious way, I hope both he and the hon. member for Regina East, not forgetting their wealthy colleague from York South, have taken steps to do this very thing. Otherwise, it appears to me that once more the members of the New Democratic Party are saying: "Don't do what we do, do what we say", which is the double standard and the double talk that we so often hear from the members of that party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. The hon. member for Broadview.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, as Your Honour so often says, I am wondering just when the hon. member is going to get to his question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I have recognized the hon. member for Broadview for the purpose of answering a question. Is the hon. member for Comox-Alberni rising for the purpose of speaking in this debate?

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member's question. I am happy to see so many members in the House this afternoon, since attendance on Friday afternoons is usually pretty thin. When we proposed to the Minister of Finance that he live on \$39.60 a week, which is the average unemployment insurance benefit a person would receive, we were challenging the Minister of Finance to do just that. One thing I like about the type of government we have is that there is a front bench on which sit men who are attempting to lead the country. If these men do not accept that challenge, then it does not give us very much strength to proceed. What we need is acceptance of such a challenge, in the same way as yesterday they accepted the challenge to withdraw the Auditor General bill.

I am sure that the hon. member for Eskimo, or rather Esquimalt—it sounds to me so much like an ice cream sandwich I have difficulty remembering his constituency.

Mr. Dinsdale: "Boloney sandwich".

Mr. Gilbert: The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich is a single man, one who has not had the responsibility of marriage or children. Nevertheless, he could be representative of single people in Canada, and if he could live on \$39 a week and accepts the challenge, I too will accept the same challenge and live on \$39 a week, plus an allowance for a married man and for children. Then, we will have a real battle.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, in view of the hon. member's failure to answer my question, I think a supplementary question is in order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret I must advise the hon. member for Broadview that his [Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

time has expired, and it is not in order to accept a further question unless he has unanimous consent of the House.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Let us hear the supplementary question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton.

Mr. Murray McBride (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I shall take but a few minutes to comment on item 44 standing on the Order Paper in the name of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro). I think the speeches so far in this debate from both sides of the House have pinpointed most of the issues. I want to add my few words and say it seems to me that, although this bill is essentially a limited one which seeks merely to amend the Old Age Security Act, what we have before us is but one approach in a broad spectrum of approaches to attempt to eliminate and reduce poverty in Canada.

Poverty will be attacked through various mechanisms, such as family allowance, old age security, the guaranteed income supplement, the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Assistance Act and other measures. I shall not go into any of those in detail; this can, and I hope will, be done in committee.

It is my opinion that a guaranteed income in Canada in this technological age that we have entered, and in which we are destined to live for some time, is inevitable. Sooner or later we will have to have a total, integrated plan for a guaranteed income that is applied across the board. What we have at the present time, if I may be permitted to describe it in the broadest sense, is just that, a guaranteed income. If you consider the programs to which I have just referred, plus the additional programs administered by the municipalities and provinces with the aid of federal financial assistance, there is no way a person, regardless of age can live below a certain economic standard. The problem is that that standard varies depending on a person's age.

For example, a man who is 64 is not eligible for certain benefits which he will receive only when he reaches the age of 65. The question is really a philosophical one. No member of this House would want to see a citizen of Canada forced to live below a certain level; but the issue boils down to one of finance. Can we afford to give people a certain income? Can we afford to establish a higher guaranteed income in Canada? If we can we must then ask ourselves how much it will cost. I suppose some hon. members might quite logically ask whether we can afford not to provide it. It seems to me there are good arguments on both sides.

● (2:50 p.m.)

If I can deal with those arguments for a moment, I should like to say that the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert) quoted accurately from what I said as recorded in *Hansard* for April 6, that the research done