

*Old Age Security Act*

will introduce a new bill in a few days, after consultation with the provinces.

If I recall correctly the remarks he made in the House a short time ago, the minister had said that the provincial ministers of Health did not think it was possible to lower to 60 the age for eligibility to the old age security pension.

I do not question what the hon. minister said but I would like to know, if he is agreeable, whether the provincial ministers of Health have changed their minds so that the minister will be able to have this bill passed today.

I would therefore be pleased to listen to the minister's comments in that regard.

• (1600)

[*English*]

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been waiting patiently for the minister to speak, but perhaps he is not going to do so. I wonder if he would mind answering a question at this time. Is the minister going to speak? I will be glad to defer to him, both from the point of view of seniority and of interest, in order to hear what he has to say.

**Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer a few points to the minister. It is not my purpose to add to the length of this debate. As a matter of fact, I waited until members of the Social Credit party indicated that they had completed their remarks before rising. The minister has indicated that he will reply, and I am sure we all look forward to his remarks. In view of that, I decided to put a few thoughts on the record because I did not speak on second reading of the bill although I am intensely interested in this matter, as is everyone in the House.

I am inclined to agree, and I am sure this will be confirmed that as a result of representations made with regard to lowering the age of eligibility to 60, some provinces have made moves in this direction. There has been concern about the means test aspect of pensions and I believe some provinces would prefer to provide relief by way of supplementary pension, leaving the old age security base where it is.

I am not really concerned about my friends in the Social Credit party suggesting that the NDP will be criticized no matter how members vote on this amendment. There is the suggestion that we will be accused of opposing the lowering of the pensionable age. However, I think our point of view is well known across this country. As a matter of fact, many of our critics from all parties have accused us of having dewy-eyed feelings about pensions, or having a pension paranoia. I think the Social Credit party has put itself in an excellent position to blame other parties for not lowering the pensionable age at this time. This is why I hope the minister will enlighten us on this matter.

Let me tell hon. members in the Social Credit party that if I thought we could get the pension age lowered, without delaying the pension increase to \$100 and the increase in the supplement, by having this matter sent back to the committee where the whole exercise would be gone through again, I would vote with them. But I am not convinced that is the case. I have no secret line of com-

[Mr. Rondeau.]

munication with the minister, even though we share the same first name, but I think that by supporting this referral motion we will be accused of delaying and frustrating the immediate implementation of the increase. No matter what the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) has said, the Social Credit party will bear the brunt of the blame for holding up this measure, whatever their reasoning.

I have read the amendment very carefully and I see in it no reference whatsoever to the lowering of the age of eligibility. If it contained such a provision, it would be out of order. That party has simply proposed an amendment for the purpose of political gain. That is all right, because that is what we are here for—to make political points. We are politicians, we play political games and we might as well admit it. That party does not have a monopoly on political games: we are all fairly skilled in these games or we would not be here.

**An hon. Member:** You should worry about your own party.

**Mr. Rose:** I know that some members sitting close to me would say they are not politicians but are, rather, statesmen. The amendment before us is very general, and no matter how the NDP votes, our record is very clear on the matter of pensions. We are not going to be concerned by parliamentary devices of this kind.

On March 1 we had the opportunity to listen to the very thorough, impressive and interesting speech of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) in respect of social questions and old age security, although I thought he was almost defensive. I think it is important that we discuss old age security, and we have done so on many occasions. Old age is a time of great uncertainty. Legislators can do something about certain areas but there are others in which we can do nothing. People like my mother, for instance, have a great deal about which to be insecure.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Rose:** That is because of her age. The minister dragged in his relatives during his speech, so I do not see why I should not be able to drag in mine.

**Mr. Baldwin:** The only thing you have made secure is the government.

**Mr. Rose:** I am not involved in the question of old age security just on an altruistic basis. I am very interested in senior citizens and how we look after them, because I hope to be one some day. Great adjustments have to be made by the elderly because of a new life style. Perhaps they have suffered a recent bereavement or they wander around in their homes because their children have left. Perhaps because of the great mobility in this country, their families are spread across the land. There is the probability of loneliness, perhaps failing health or other discomforts. Legislators can do something to assist in this period of adjustment, euphemistically known as the golden years, but there are many things about which legislators can do nothing. Some problems just happen to be a natural part of the aging process.