

*Old Age Security Act*

ance, is not more than \$1,260 a year. If the Old Age Assistance Act is cancelled it seems to me this would mean we would be taking away the rights with regard to unmarried persons. Since this bill does not refer to unmarried persons it would seem that some people will lose out.

Section 7 of the Old Age Assistance Act states that in every agreement the province shall, subject to section 3, specify the minimum age of a recipient and any other conditions of eligibility set forth in the provincial law. I should like to give credit to the government of the province of British Columbia for its thinking in this regard. It has specified the minimum age of a recipient at below age 65. It would seem to me that by cancelling the Old Age Assistance Act we may be cancelling the provision which enables the provinces to pay pensions to people under age 65 and have the federal government share in this.

I hope that this matter will be discussed in the committee so that I may be reassured no harm will be done by the cancellation of the Old Age Assistance Act. I am more reassured when the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) tells me that it will not hurt anyone than I am by the press releases of the federal government at this time.

I shall not take any more of the time of the House because I realize other members wish to speak. I, like others who have spoken, will support this bill because it covers 80,000 people in need. I think the faults in the bill are obvious to all members. A re-writing of the bill would seem to be necessary. We will support the bill at this stage in the hope that it will come back from the committee in an improved state.

**Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to take part in this debate. I share the sentiments expressed by my colleagues on this side of the House, with which I know the minister agrees, that this matter should proceed today to the appropriate standing committee so that it might be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

I listened with great interest, if I may say so, to the remarks of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Quite frankly I felt a little badly that he, particularly in the context of this type of legislation, should have been pilloried for being the only member of his party present in the House. I thought that was most unfair, particularly by reason of the fact that most of the members who were doing the pilloring know that he is better than any five of them put together when it comes to the matter of pensions and in terms of his contribution to this House. This does not take away in any way from those who chose to castigate him and his party because he was the only person here; it is merely putting them in their proper place and order in the scheme of things.

I believe the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has a reputation in Canada for being one of the advocates of justice for senior citizens and for the disadvantaged. I think it is a reputation many members in this House would like to have at the end of their parliamentary career. Notwithstanding the fact that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is a recipient of old age security he is one of the more youthful members of this House, and is perhaps only half way through his parliamentary career.

[Mr. McKinnon.]

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I am just getting started.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** I am glad the hon. member said that because I wish to read a poem which I think might be of interest this afternoon, and which may apply to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre at some time, but certainly not today.

A man isn't old when his hair turns grey;  
Nor yet is he old when his teeth decay;  
But he's heading fast for his last long sleep.  
When his mind makes appointments that his body can't keep.

I do not know in what category of that poem the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre might fall, but he is a man who has brought great distinction to this House. I believe he has fought the case as hard as anyone in this country for senior citizens and pensioners of all kinds. I am glad he has had the advantage of reading the literature produced by the Progressive Conservative party during the last election, because there was in that literature a commitment to something that goes far beyond this particular legislation. I am glad he has said he supports advances in pension legislation.

I am sure we all agree that parliaments must deal with the pieces of legislation they have before them. This is an inadequate piece of legislation for many Canadians. It discriminates, as many members have said, against the large group of Canadians who perhaps finds themselves, in terms of their ability to make a place for themselves in the work force, in a worse position than others. However, that is the extent of the government's commitment with regard to old age security at this time. I do not know how else to measure the commitment of a government than by looking at the legislation that is brought before us. If this is the extent, and I think it is at this time, of the government's commitment, then I think it is inadequate.

● (1530)

Although we intend to support the legislation on the same basis as does the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, that is, on the basis that it is a small step forward, we cannot support it without bringing forth questions—it would be dishonest for us to merely say, yes, we support the bill—in terms of that group of people in Canada whom the bill does not affect, such as single women, widows, widowers, bachelors and divorced persons. I know there are federal-provincial problems. The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) said that applying the provisions of this legislation to the above mentioned group of people is a long way away, if it is to come at all.

The liberal government has the habit of trotting out some things on a four year basis in terms of advance notice. I do not know why they do that, and the beauty of this Friday afternoon does not allow me to be cynical, but the fact of the matter is that this legislation is only worthy of support to the extent that it goes. It should not be built into something that it is not, and I hope that if necessity speeded us into an election perhaps we could find ourselves dealing with those categories of people who have been left out from this legislation.

The other matter dealt with by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre in terms of the literature to which