

Old Age Security

disabled and infirm, we must all agree that between the idea the minister had in some of his speeches and the action he proposes in this legislation falls the shadow of disappointment and disenchantment.

Mr. Reilly: Mr. Chairman, yesterday the minister sponsoring this bill, if I can quote from *Hansard*, said that the opposition reminded him of the magic men from the carnival medicine shows peddling the same thin sugar and water concoctions as a cure for everything that ails us. If I might continue in the same carnival metaphor, I would suggest that the demeanour of the minister and his accomplices is rapidly taking on that of another kind of carnival operator who used to operate what is known as the shell game—now you see it, now you don't.

● (2120)

In March 1973, when the minister introduced his \$100 minimum pension, he said it was enough to banish poverty among the old people of this country.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I think the hon. member is referring to a so-called quotation that he knows very well was incorrect. I never said that, and he acknowledged that, indeed, there was an error at the time.

Mr. Reilly: I acknowledged that the minister said it was an error. He accused *Hansard* of improperly translating his remarks, but in all of the time I have observed the proceedings of this House and in all of the time I have taken part in the proceedings here I have found the *Hansard* reporters to be impeccable in their interpretation.

Mr. Lalonde: On the point of order, Mr. Chairman, if the hon. member wants to make a specific accusation or charge I challenge him to do so. I never accused *Hansard* of anything. I corrected *Hansard* on the basis of what I actually said, and that part of *Hansard* was a translation. If he reads the French text, which was the actual text, he will see that I never said anything of the sort. I should think that the hon. member would at least have the courtesy of taking my word for it. If he does not, I challenge him.

An hon. Member: We are going to have a duel.

Mr. Reilly: What I suspect really happened was that there was a press release prepared by the minister's office and given to *Hansard*, as is very often the custom, and the minister revised the speech when he found the particular phrase to be fatuous. But somewhere along the line he slipped up. I believe someone in the minister's department in a fairly influential position in fact believed that a \$100 pension was going effectively to abolish poverty among the aged in this country. I believe such people still exist and are still trying to convince us of that view.

Before I go any further I want to ask the minister the same question I asked him twice yesterday, to which I received no reply. I want to ask him, first, is it not true that since 1963 the purchasing power of the Canadian dollar has shrunk by almost 50 per cent? Secondly do he and his colleagues sincerely believe—and I think the country has a right to know this—that the figure now proposed for an individual or a couple is enough to allow that

[Mr. Stackhouse.]

individual or couple to live in dignity and in comfort? I want a yes or no answer right now.

Mr. Lalonde: If the hon. member will sit down I will stand up, Mr. Chairman.

An hon. Member: This is not the question period.

Mr. Lalonde: Are you ready now?

Mr. Reilly: Yes.

Mr. Lalonde: As far as the first part of the question is concerned, I do not have the exact figures of the increase in the consumer price index over the last 10 years. It may be what the hon. member suggests, but I do not know. It may well be different.

One thing that should also be mentioned is that the real income of Canadians during that period—and I suspect that the hon. member took that period because it was 10 years of Liberal government—has increased very substantially, much greater than the increase in the consumer price index; and he can check that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lalonde: As to the second part of the question the hon. member has raised, everybody has his own view as to what the figure should be, but I might indicate to the hon. member that the Economic Council of Canada published figures some time ago as to what they called the poverty level.

Mr. Yewchuk: When?

Mr. Lalonde: These figures have been adjusted to the present time taking into account the increase in the consumer price index. I am sorry, the figures are as of the end of 1972. The council suggested that for a couple the figure was \$3,516.

I might remind the hon. member that with the increase which was granted in April we raised the guaranteed income of a senior citizen for the first time above the level as defined by the Economic Council of Canada. As a result of the measure proposed today, the income of a couple is going to be \$4,101.60, if I know how to multiply \$341.80 by 12. Whether this is enough or not, once more anybody can have a view on this, but I would think as compared with other situations, and particularly those in various provinces under Conservative administration—and I refer to the case of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the point he raised—

Mr. Reilly: Mr. Speaker, I did not ask for a political speech. I asked for a yes or no answer and I did not get it.

An hon. Member: Oh, sit down.

Mr. Reilly: I believe I have the floor, Mr. Chairman.

An hon. Member: Ask a question or sit down.

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. Will the hon. member take his seat. The hon. member knows that under the procedures of the committee once a member relinquishes the floor to someone else, even if it is to answer a