

feel that as legislators it is our duty to take part in the drafting of a bill.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for having drawn the attention of the Chair to the provisions of Standing Order 63. The hon. member will agree that even though everything in this Standing Order is correct, there is no question of expressing doubt regarding one jot of it. All this remains subject to the initiative of the Crown to introduce in the House the aids referred to, the allotment of supplies and the expenditures. Thus, it is the gift of Parliament, that is the House, once the introduction has been made, with the consent of the Crown. The hon. member is right, but to a certain extent only. The fact remains that the philosophy of financial initiatives by the Crown must, to a certain extent, take precedence over the provisions of Standing Order 63.

[English]

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, in commencing this debate at the report stage of Bill C-202, my purpose, motive and approach is to make to this House as earnest a plea as I possibly can. My plea is that the escalating of the basic old age pension by at least 2 per cent per year be continued.

As Your Honour is aware and, indeed, as Your Honour has often drawn to our attention, the rules relating to the report stage of a debate require that we concentrate on particular issues and points that are underlined by any amendments that we move.

The two amendments to the bill that I am seeking by motions number one and number three, which Your Honour has allowed, combine to do one thing, namely to keep in effect the provision under which the basic old age pension, even if that is all a person receives, will be escalated every year by up to 2 per cent if there is an increase in the cost of living. This is the issue in this debate.

My interest in old age pensions is well known. It is hardly necessary to make the point that there are many aspects of the matter which concern me. Like the hon. member for Portneuf (Mr. Godin) who sought to move a different type of motion, I would like to see the total amount of the pension increased to \$150 a month. There are other things which I would also like to see done to improve the lot of our senior citizens.

However, in this debate and the vote that will follow, we shall be dealing with one issue only. I hope that the good will and concern of hon. members for our senior citizens will lead them to think very deeply about this matter and to support the proposition that the escalation of the basic old age pension must be continued. Just to make it clear why I keep referring to the basic old age pension, let me point out that in Bill C-202 as it stands the basic old age pension is to be frozen at \$80 a month effective January 1, and in the case of all those persons who draw only the basic old age pension there is to be no further escalation of that pension in response to increases in the cost of living. It is true that the principle of escalating a portion of the old age pension is to continue

### *Old Age Security Act*

with respect to the supplement and that any person who draws any portion of the supplement will, under the terms of Bill C-202, have his total pension, his basic \$80 plus his supplement, escalated according to the formula set out in the Canada Pension Plan. In making this statement at this point, I am already drawing attention to the fact that our senior citizens are being divided into two groups, one of which will benefit from the escalation of the pension while another will be entitled to no escalation of the old age pension whatsoever.

● (3:30 p.m.)

This is a very serious matter, Mr. Speaker, not just because the sum of \$1.17 a month is involved, not just because a certain number of people are affected, but because it concerns our whole approach to the affairs of senior citizens, and, indeed, our whole approach to society. I believe that before we call it Christmas we should reconsider what has been done in the drafting of this bill and I plead as earnestly as I can with Liberal members of this House to support these two motions in order that we may continue the escalation of the basic old age pension.

It will be no surprise to hon. members if I say, as I have said on previous occasions, that my correspondence with pensioners in this country is very heavy. I believe I can say that the letters I receive are a good barometer of what the senior citizens are thinking. I can tell this House, and I tell the government, that there is among old age pensioners today great and very bitter disappointment over this decision to freeze the basic old age pension at \$80 and permit no further increase in line with the rising cost of living. I shall not take the time to go into all the figures I recited on second reading. There was some discussion about them when the bill was before the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. But even if the minister and I cannot agree on the number affected, even if he wants to think in terms of 200,000 and I prefer to think in terms of 510,000, a great number of our pensioners will be receiving only the basic pension and will not get a cost of living supplement such as they have been receiving for the past two or three years, and these people feel sad, they feel let down, they feel disappointed. They just do not believe the Parliament of Canada would do this to them. I said earlier that this is not just a matter of a \$1.17. I know it is a cliché to say it is not the amount of money that matters, but the principle. But this is what is being said by people who are writing letters to me at this time. They say: If the government needs my \$1.17, I am a loyal Canadian and I will help them out, but why should we be separated from other old age pensioners? That is the point. Why should senior citizens be divided into two distinct groups? These people are expressing their disappointment and they have every right to express it. Parliament is extremely ill-advised to create this sadness, this feeling of being let down, this sense of disappointment which our people are feeling, and it relates not only to the amount of money involved. Small per month as \$1.17 may be, as far as they are concerned, even the total saving to the treasury is terribly small as far as the federal budget is concerned. I shall return to this point in a few minutes. The point I