

Old Age Security Act Amendment

there will be no getting out of that and again it will be our old people who will suffer, while bureaucrats and investigators will thrive on that.

Besides, we in the province of Quebec discuss this over-all plan, because it will probably be in agreement with the plan of the provincial government. The Quebec government has advised the leaders of the present federal government that it is getting ready to take back old age security pensions. In this regard, we find in *Le Devoir* of December 5, 1966 an article entitled:

Old Age Security:

To say no to Quebec, Ottawa will advance mainly economic arguments.

At a time when the government is endeavouring to prevent the establishment of a special status in Quebec, at a time also when social security is considered more and more as an instrument for the application of national economic policies, the decision of the Johnson government to assume full and exclusive responsibility in the field of old age pensions gives rise to the greatest interest in the capital.

There is, first, the constitutional aspect of the question, but that is not all. It has been shown, in that respect, that nothing in the British North America Act forbids a province to establish an old age pension plan.

On the contrary, the constitution had to be amended in 1951 precisely to enable the federal government to take action in that area of social security, which had, until then, remained unoccupied, provided that such action was not inconsistent with existing or future provincial legislation.

We know by what stratagem the federal government took over social matters in 1951. After taking away from the provinces their powers of taxation and all means of organizing their own social system, the federal government quickly interfered in fields which were 100 per cent under the jurisdiction of the provinces. It continues to do so today. The government still refuses to give back to the provinces what it borrowed from them. Yet, when the government borrowed these powers of taxation, it agreed to give them back to the provinces as soon as the war was over. It is said that the provinces are unable to organize social security. Of course, they are unable to do so. All the means of doing so have been taken away from them, and today it is said that they are unable to do it.

Well, I think that Quebec will probably give a lesson in courtesy to the central government who wants to centralize everything here. The present Johnson government is not the only one to do that, one need only to look at the

[Mr. Gauthier.]

Liberal party. In fact, today's issue of *Le Devoir* says:

Johnson will not be alone in his fight against Ottawa. The Liberals will support him.

The Liberals will support Mr. Johnson in order to regain their rights from Ottawa.

I believe that the Quebec era is about to begin, Mr. Chairman. Quebec was long enough the object of ridicule. I am certain that if the opposition, as well as the government in office, continue their good work in the orientation and planning of social matters, Quebec will certainly attain its goal, at any cost, and the Ottawa government will be forced to restore what it borrowed.

Mr. Guay: Stole?

Mr. Gauthier: What it borrowed. I hope that during the referendum which will take place in the province of Quebec on that matter, and I believe that will be an eye-opener for Ottawa—that there is a majority of 75 per cent for the repatriation of our taxation legislation and that we will be able to live in a Canada where the provinces will be free in the exercise of their internal administration.

I submit that the act as it is presented does not constitute an amendment to the Old Age Security Act. It is merely a social assistance measure and we have already one in Quebec. As drafted, this act is not at all what the Liberal party had promised in the election before last.

• (5:00 p.m.)

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Gauthier: Yes, certainly, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I must apologize to the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Chairman, I was rising on a question of privilege. First, I would like to hear again what the hon. member for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier) has said, to ascertain whether I understood him properly. I believe, if attention was paid to his words, that there are grounds for the question of privilege—tomorrow's official report will tell. At a certain point, while speaking about the inquiries to be conducted by our civil servants to check whether or not people will be eligible