

Old Age Pensions

protect public security, I believe it is most important that they obey a law voted by Parliament.

● (1530)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—GOVERNMENT'S NEGLECTED TO PAY OLD AGE PENSION TO PERSONS AGED 60 AND THEIR SPOUSE

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi) moved:

That this House regrets that the Government neglected to make all those who reached the age of 60, as well as their spouses although such spouses may not have reached pensionable age, eligible for the Old Age Pension.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the motion I am moving in the name of my colleagues of the Social Credit Party of Canada stems from the numerous letters and communications we receive from our constituents, claiming that pensionable age be possible at 60, with an appropriate pension, and that the spouse of a person eligible for old age pension be equally eligible for that pension, as I have been requesting in this House since 1966.

I can hardly believe, Mr. Speaker, that we on this side of the House are the only members receiving such requests from the voters we represent, and I am certain that other members receive the same. Yet, the government is in no hurry to answer the requests of these people. The leader of the liberal party of Canada did promise during the last election campaign that the wife whose husband has reached 65 would be entitled to the old age pension. But we are still far from allowing early retirement at a reasonable age in our modern times when the production of goods and services is increasingly easy.

As soon as the leader of the liberal party resumed his office of Prime Minister, he made a step backwards and we heard in the speech from the Throne that the wife or the spouse will have to wait until October of 1975 at least to see that promise carried out. And yet while he was in Trois-Rivières, the leader of the liberal party promised that the 60 to 65 year-old wife would receive a pension as soon as the liberal party was reelected. At that time, there is no doubt that many women of that age believed that promise and decided to vote for the Liberals. I would not be surprised that many of them kissed him for that promise. However, they will have to wait for a year and a half after the federal election to see that promise fulfilled. That is the reason why we are blaming the government for not having taken at the beginning of this session the necessary action for the enacting of such legislation and for this government to acknowledge the services those people rendered their country.

With the developments in all types of industries, it seems to me that 42 years of assiduous work are enough to have done one's duty towards society.

The figures of Statistics Canada show that in 1972 the life expectancy was 69.3 years for men and 76.3 years for women. Under the present Old Age Security Act, this

[Mr. Chrétien.]

means that a woman has a life expectancy of only 11 years when she reaches retirement age. As for men, they have a life expectancy of only four years when they reach retirement age.

After working hard for more than forty years, men and women should be able to do what they like in complete financial security.

Lowering the eligibility age to 60 for those who wish it would not mean that these people would have to remain inactive. They will be able to render many other services to their country and to their community without being forced to do so. They would be happier.

It is not the first time that we request this in the House. We have done so several times before, and I realize that we are getting more and more support, especially from this side of the House, and that a few government members agree with me but do not dare say so. They say that because of party policy, of government solidarity, the part does not want this change. We shall probably hear the same old objections: "It would cost too much money." Of course, if we think only in terms of dollars or of the taxation capacity, we may be reluctant to accept this proposal but we should see the facts as they really are.

If people aged 60 to 65 agreed to retire at 60, would this weaken the national production rate in Canada? Do we not have a whole army of young people with a college or university education who are waiting only for an employment offer to put their talents to use, to earn their living honourably and to give their services to their country to develop it and serve it? Did we not penalize farmers because they were producing too much?

There has been of late much publicity about the food destroyed. No way could be found sell them, let alone eat them. Industry is slowing down almost everywhere, if not at a standstill, so it is unthinkable not to allow people, men and women, to retire at age 60.

Only yesterday a 65-year-old man told me that because of ill health he had to cease working at 60. Great numbers of people are also worn out or ill well before the present retirement age.

I put this motion forward because I believe the Canadian government can lower retirement age to 60 without upsetting anything.

I am also seeking that old age security pension be paid to the pensioner's spouse as soon as the former reaches retirement age. This is also very important and should be considered now by the government.

Madam Speaker, I have been regularly putting forward a motion of this kind since 1966, the first member I believe to do so. Opposition members supported me, Liberal members spoke against it. But older people, and even the young I meet, all favour such an amendment to the Old Age Security Act. It is at their request that I have caused this motion to appear under my name on the order paper.

When only one of the spouses receives the old age security pension, the income of the couple becomes insufficient and the wife must, most of the times, resort to welfare. In Quebec, I assure you, Madam Speaker, that it is often disheartening for these people to appeal to officials for their living.