

Old Age Security Act Amendment

The Liberal party, supporting the government, voted against that. Then, periodically thereafter, the hon. member for Grey-Bruce, as did other hon. members, raised this question. The hon. member for Grey-Bruce, on July 14, 1966, moved to adjourn the house to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance:

—namely the total inadequacy of the policy just announced by the government—

That was the guaranteed income plan.

—which will deprive the senior citizens of Canada of the justice to which they are entitled, and the vital necessity of an alternative which would give an immediate increase of \$25 a month to all citizens at age 65.

On March 26, 1965, it was moved by myself, and seconded again by the hon. member for Perth:

That all the words after "that" be struck out and the following substituted therefor:

That Bill No. C-136—

That was the bill covering the Canada Pension Plan.

—be not now read a third time but that it be referred back to the committee of the whole so that the government may give consideration to and introduce amendments to the said bill to provide for a minimum payment of \$25 per month out of the Canada Pension Plan account to all persons between the ages of 65 and 69 years who are retired from regular employment, and also to provide an increase from \$75 per month to \$100 per month for all those now 70 years of age or over.

Again on June 21, 1966, we took action in this regard, and again the government turned us down. On July 4, 1966, the matter was dealt with once more, and it is significant that when I was speaking on that occasion I was interrupted by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. The following exchange took place, as recorded at page 7134 of *Hansard* for that date:

We have again made our position clear on various occasions throughout this debate. Our position is simply that no alternative to \$100 a month for the old age pensioners will meet the situation.

Mr. Knowles: Without any means test.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes, without a means test.

• (4:00 p.m.)

That course we have followed consistently. Then, finally, on November 21, 1966, as recorded at page 10119 of *Hansard*, it was moved by the hon. member for Grey-Bruce, seconded by the hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale, that consideration be given to granting an immediate increase to all those in receipt of old age pensions without the imposition of a means test, or a needs test, or

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

requiring any disclosure of income or financial resources. Those various amendments were all ruled out of order or defeated. In every case when they were ruled out of order, it was members of the Liberal party who rose in their places; they were frightened at the prospect of having to vote on those amendments. They argued that the amendments were not within the power of the house to move in committee or otherwise as the case may be. Now, they are going to impose a means test. It means that Canadians are going to be taxed and are not going to receive the benefit therefrom, unless they are able to establish that they are in a position now recognized as one of destitution, within an income maximum of \$1,260 a year.

There was a time when it might have been argued that there was no reason why the old age pension should be paid to everybody. Today, the old age security program is financed by Canadian taxpayers through a 3 per cent sales tax, a 3 per cent tax on corporation income and, subject to a limit of \$120 a year, a 4 per cent tax on personal income. What is happening here now under this bill is that Canadians are being taxed for something they have purchased by taxation and contributed to, yet they will be denied the right to receive the increase. This is wrong. I know it is very seldom Right Hon. Mackenzie King is quoted by the Liberal party today; but that was the principle he enunciated over and over again. He said there should be no discrimination, that there should be nothing in the nature of a means test. Today, the minister introduces this bill. It must have taken him a long while to write his speech; it had "Kentish" touches about it.

An hon. Member: He just read it.

Mr. Diefenbaker: He did not have anything to do with it. There are definitely "Kentish" touches about it. He said that it is not a means test and is not a needs test. You have to take a second and a third look at it. There was not very much applause from the Liberal benches when he mentioned this. He said, "You will find this is the only fair course to follow". I understand, if press references have any basis in fact, that there is going to be an additional tax levied in order to finance this measure. Again, it will be paid by all Canadians. Today, Canadians earn the old age pension; they become entitled to it because of their contribution, and yet those who contribute are not to receive any benefit unless they are able to establish that they come within certain limitations of income. The present system is nothing