

Old Age Security Act Amendment

Canada. I think there is enough money available to meet the extra requirements of a flat increase across the board without a means test. It is just a matter of saving the money, here, there, and elsewhere, and several hon. members have indicated the areas in which savings could be made. But oh, no, the saving is to be made at the expense of the elderly people of this country. This is where the government is holding back the extra \$100 million a year that would be needed for everyone on a universal system. The money is not going to be given to those people who are in the marginal areas, or just over the borderline. These are the people who will be required to make the sacrifice. That is where the saving will be affected, by not paying the increase to the 200,000 or 300,000 old age pensioners who will not fill out the ministers' form, or who will not qualify under the stringent regulations which the minister will propose.

I shall conclude, Mr. Speaker, by simply saying the minister should think again about this. The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Chatterton) gave the minister a first class idea which he will find recorded at page 10949 of *Hansard* for December 9. The hon. member suggested that instead of the increase we were talking about, or the \$30 which the minister was talking about, there should be an increase which would not be in perpetuity, for those people who will not qualify under the Canada Pension Plan.

He suggested that such an increase, be it \$25 or \$30 a month, be given to all those who are now neglected and who do not qualify under the Canada Pension Plan. The amount involved would gradually diminish annually as these people pass on. I do not see why the minister cannot accept that suggestion. It would not require a means test. It would not require the filling out of the forms or the use of thousands of snoopers to determine whether people are honest, dishonest, or just innocently careless. The increase would be given to all old age pensioners, but those who eventually qualify for benefits under the Canada Pension Plan would then revert to the present \$75 a month, plus what they would draw from the Canada Pension Plan. Why can't the minister accept that idea and modify his bill accordingly?

Mr. Andrew Chatwood (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen to speak in the house, and I should say how much I appreciate this honour and the privilege that goes with it of representing the riding of Grand Falls-White

[Mr. Churchill.]

Bay-Labrador. I am also very pleased to be able to speak on Bill C-251, the guaranteed income supplement plan for old age pensioners. This is one of the most important pieces of legislation that has come before the house, and it is going to be one of the most far-reaching in consequence.

It is the fourth major piece of social security legislation which has been introduced since the government took office in April, 1963.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chatwood: No other government in the history of Canada has introduced such far-reaching and comprehensive social security measures as has the present administration. The government, and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen), are to be congratulated for establishing a well thought out plan for social security in this country.

The old concept that social security was merely a hand-out has, I think, changed and should be forgotten. What is now important is the attitude that social security means assistance for those who, through no fault of their own, are unable to earn a living to maintain the standard that they should have in the 1960's. Prior to 1963, there were three main categories of social security. First, we had the social insurance programs; second, fixed payments made automatically to individuals within given categories, such as the old age pension and disabled persons' allowance and, third, social security measures under provincial jurisdiction which were governed by means tests. This government, by expanding social insurance programs, such as the Canada Pension Plan and medicare, has taken great strides in the development of social security programs.

The other approach, fixed payments to all within a given category and the means test approach, allowed for many inconsistencies. For example, the paying of a fixed benefit to all within a given category meant that many people would not receive a sufficient supplement on which to live. The Canada Assistance Plan, therefore, was an imaginative method of ensuring a more flexible and equitable approach to people who required assistance.

This government has developed a philosophy of social security which is based on providing assistance to those in need without at the same time infringing upon their dignity as human beings, and it is consistent with this