

Old Age Security Act Amendment

bonds because they thought the government was going to stand behind them.

• (7:20 p.m.)

I hope I have made my point that these people are in a very special category and we will never again have the chance to do right by them. I do not think I am asking for anything unreasonable. I do not think the minister can say that the request is unusual, namely, that these people be given \$100 per month without test, because the parliament of this land said in 1950 that there would not be a means test any more. Old age security was to be paid as of right. I say to the minister that after the old people's trials, tribulations and struggles to keep this Canada for us, this Canada whose abundance we are enjoying today, they are entitled to their increase. Yet it is on these people that the government wishes to impose a means test.

In 1950 the committee that studied this question unanimously agreed in its report, adopted by the house, that the pension ought to be paid as a matter of right. I have been in this house for some time and I have not heard of another unanimous report.

The government says that nothing is changed and the provision is the same as under the income tax laws. Perhaps the minister would care to refer to the *Journals* of the House of Commons to see what the committee had to say. The Committee said that it is difficult to forecast the cost of any proposed means test program since it is not possible to predict the proportion of aged persons who would apply for the pension under any given income test.

In 1950 the words used were "income test". That is where the government got its idea for the means test. The government is very sensitive about this point but, as a Shakespearean character says, they protest too much. They protest too much about this means test.

In 1950 the Liberal government under prime minister St. Laurent introduced universal pensions to be paid as a matter of right with all parties supporting the move. There was not to be any penalty for thrift. The means test was out. The minister of that day, now Secretary of State for External Affairs, said that there would be no more penalties for thrift in this country. It was pointed out that people of means paid municipal taxes, income taxes, corporation taxes and so on and paid more in taxes to the government than they would ever get back in the form of pensions. Then there must be considered those aged people who had property,

[Mr. Rynard.]

who had farms and businesses they could not rent. Often in those depression days the rent for a property would not pay its taxes. Yet they could not qualify. Today we have a situation where our old people are not entitled as of right to this extra old age security pension.

Let me go farther and say that if people who do not need the extra pension receive it, it can be taken back through income tax. The government has entirely forgotten that it took the \$500 exemption away from the old people. I believe the government took this away for persons 65 years of age and over.

The Liberal government today has abandoned its principles of the past and I should like to know why. We shall see the spectre of old people embarrassed and humiliated by interference. We shall have the spectre of old people being called before boards or tribunals and having in one year to make good an overpayment of the year before, leaving some of them with hardly anything to live on. This is the mess the government is leading into. There is a forest of legislative anomalies throughout the bill.

The administrative costs, it will be found, will eat up any savings there might be. From the standpoint of geriatrics any such administrative procedures can only be damaging to the old people. That is why in 1950 the then minister of national health and welfare, the present Secretary of State for External Affairs, felt that never again should our senior citizens be brought into court and penalized for offences they did not really understand. The people across Canada applauded him for that. Never again would peoples' estates be taxed to recover overpayments.

Three principles were established at that time. First, the right of every senior citizen to the old age security pension was established. The second principle was the abolition of any tests of means or income. The third principle was that there would be no more humiliation and embarrassment to our senior citizens with the consequences that sometimes followed. The pension then was set at \$40 a month. Five years later the Liberal government increased the pension by \$6. Do you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? I know that you follow these things because you read history. That increase was not enough and the people of Canada spoke.

When the Conservative government took office it increased the pension by another \$9, making it \$55 a month. The Liberals were criticized across the land for their cheap \$6