

*Old Age Security Act Amendment*

and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) from a purely—I have used the word “purely” but I prefer to withdraw it and substitute “impurely”—political speech that he made earlier this evening. I would like to place on the record the fact that not one member of the cabinet on the front benches on the other side applauded the speech of the minister while he was trying his best to talk out this measure tonight. I suppose any hon. member could call it ten o'clock but I do not intend to do so. I simply want to throw back at the minister all the mistakes he has made in trying to bring this measure before us for third and final reading.

He has tried to twist any word of criticism that has been uttered against this measure, and there have been many. There has been criticism of snooperism, criticism of bureaucratism, criticism of the easy way out by a government that fears that somehow, somewhere, some person of 70 years of age is going to take \$2.20 out of the treasury of Canada to which he is not entitled. That person is to have the whole establishment of government come down on him. He is to have the R.C.M.P. march upon him, he is to have the Department of National Revenue march upon him, he is to have the Department of National Health and Welfare march upon him, and he may be subjected to any type of malicious letter, signed or not, which can be brought against him. None the less, witting or unwittingly—and I would not like to think a fellow Nova Scotian would take an unwitting approach in a case like this—this is exactly what will happen.

We in the opposition are castigated and categorized because we simply want to bring some small element of common sense into the supplement to old age benefits. The minister has been given a chance to be one of two Scrooges. He can be the Scrooge that was or the Scrooge that would be, and our society has not dealt very kindly with the Scrooge that would be.

We have taken the abject, loathsome figure, hard on his employees, hard on society in general, and depicted that figure as the Scrooge. Yet there was the latter Scrooge, the one who was motivated by Christian kindness, by the spirit of Christmas, who wanted to do something better for his employee and for the world around him. This is the chance we have given the minister from the word go on this particular bill. But in response to our rather kindly offer of metamorphosis he has chosen to take the speeches made by those in the

[Mr. McCleave.]

official opposition and in the N.D.P. and has twisted them and attacked them, as he did earlier with respect to my efforts, the efforts of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and others. This, sir, is no way to accomplish legislation on behalf of the old age pensioners of Canada.

We have gone through Bill C-251 clause by clause and have tried to make it a little less harsh, a little more humanitarian and understanding. Our purpose on this side, once we got past the great battle of a means test or no means test, was simply to make the legislation work to the benefit of the aged. I do not think anybody should really quarrel with that, no more than anybody should quarrel with what the minister originally started out to do before he began to play partisan politics.

● (10:30 p.m.)

We have been met with ridicule and abuse from the other side. That surely is not justified. We are not here, if I can turn a phrase back on myself, as Scrooge-like people. We are here to do our duty for the constituents whom I, the Minister of National Health and Welfare and other members in the house represent. Surely it is uncalled for for the minister to ascribe motives to the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) or to other members of the official opposition, to members of the unofficial opposition or to those few members in the corner who rarely are heard except to sing out praises for the government. We have taken the attitude that surely nothing should require the great resources of government to be used against the simple resources of the individual citizen of Canada.

What is wrong with that approach? If we are going to haul somebody into court and say to him that somehow he has received a couple of miserable dollars out of the treasury of Canada more than he is entitled to, why should we throw the whole of the weight of a government department against that lone individual? We have made a partial correction in respect of income tax returns. Why should we use the full weight of the state, why should we use the police and other people, including the minister's 500 or so permanent new additions to his staff and whatever others he may add?

**An hon. Member:** Investigators.

**Mr. McCleave:** Yes, investigators. Why should we place the crushing weight of all these people against somebody who probably quite innocently has managed to get two or three dollars or \$36 or \$40 extra a year out of