

the first round. During the first round in committee seven different amendments were moved to the bill seeking all the possible combinations by way of improving this bill. Every last one was ruled out of order, for all of them involved the expenditure of money and were not permissible as amendments by private members.

If this bill went back to committee, all that would happen would be a repetition of that process. The committee is already slated to meet tomorrow to deal with the housing bill. I do not know when it would get this bill. It could possibly be tomorrow, but more likely Friday or Monday. When one adds up the few days of delay that could occur, the result could well be that this bill would not be through in time for the \$13.39 to be added to the April cheque, that being the additional amount that everyone of Canada's 1,800,000 old age pensioners will get if this bill passes. This motion is so empty, sterile and meaningless that this House would be acting in an utterly irresponsible way if it passed it at this time.

I was pleased to hear the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) confirm this afternoon what I attributed to him when I spoke on a point of order last night, namely, that he has agreed to appear before the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs to deal with the whole question of lowering the pensionable age and to deal with it in depth. The chairman of that committee was here a few minutes ago. He is probably still within the sound of my voice. The minister also made it clear in committee that as far as he could see, it would be in order if we made a report on the estimates of that department, including a recommendation with respect to the lowering of the pensionable age. Knowing the make-up of that committee, knowing the members, Social Credit, Liberal, Conservative and New Democratic Party, who believe in lowering the eligible age, I am confident that out of that discussion will come a report back to the House calling for legislation to lower the age of eligibility. If I have my way, that report will also call for action to be taken this session and for there to be another bill to amend the act with regard to the amount of the pension.

• (1700)

I agree with the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) that there is need for us to discuss this whole question, to discuss all the aspects of old age security in a reasonable way, to discuss these matters in depth and to come up with long-lasting and satisfying solutions. I do not see how we can possibly do this in one day or two days, meeting under the gun of this bill with the necessity that it be passed so that these increases can go out.

If we did not already have a unanimous understanding in that committee, as well as the approval of the chairman and of the minister, to hold these discussions, some hon. members might say this was only a promise which might not be implemented. But this is our understanding. It is on the record of the committee, and it has been confirmed this afternoon by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, that we shall do, in the committee, with time available in which to do it, precisely what this amendment seeks. On the other hand, if the amendment were to carry and we were to send the bill back, we would not even have the authority to add to it or to report recommending

Old Age Security Act

anything. We could only return the bill to the House, exactly as it is. In the consideration of the estimates, however, we do have an opportunity to make a report, to make recommendations, and I believe this is precisely what we should do.

There is also something to be said for the fact that conferences among the 11 governments in this country are in prospect for next month on the whole question of old age security, the Canada Pension Plan and other forms of income maintenance and income security. If this session does continue—and one never knows; it is a week-by-week session—I see the possibility of this kind of discussion both in the standing committee and among the 11 governments of Canada resulting in further social security legislation this session. I say to the minister that this is what I want to see. I think I see his head nodding up and down. Yes, it is. In other words, he is hoping to see it too. Well, he is in a position to do something about it, and I suggest that if we are reasonable, if we get this bill passed and these payments into effect, we shall then have an opportunity to discuss further action which ought to be taken.

So, because of concern across Canada today as reports go out that this bill was blocked last night and is still being debated, I suggest we should not postpone a decision any longer. The passing of this amendment could have no worth while effect. The only result would be a few days' delay, which might jeopardize the revised cheques being received in April. This House should do the responsible thing—reject this amendment and pass the motion for third reading and send the bill to the other place so that it can become law right away.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is on the amendment (Mr. La Salle). All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

The House divided on the amendment (Mr. La Salle) which was negated on the following division:

• (1710)

(Division No. 20)

YEAS

Messrs:

Allard
Beaudoin
Boisvert

Caouette
(Charlevoix)
Dionne

Fortin
Gauthier
(Roberval)