

Old Age Security Act

related programs: \$240 million; veterans pensions and allowances: \$470 million; student loans: \$110 million; public housing: the amount is not mentioned; assistance to natives: \$80 million, which makes a grand total of \$11,395 million for all these programs which are scattered and administered at various levels of government, federal, provincial or municipal.

At the bottom, a note is added to show these are approximate figures, and that other programs may have been omitted from the table.

So, if it is desired to consider very seriously, in terms of figures, the possibility for Canada to introduce the groups of persons that are not included in the bill but that have needs, one could determine quite clearly that it might cost approximately \$2 billion. This would bring the cost of these programs to \$13,395 million.

But as the minister suggested this afternoon, a deduction should be made from that total of all amounts paid in social welfare and cost sharing programs. This would of course reduce the overall amounts.

Second, consideration should be given to the fact that OAS and welfare payments to various categories of people in Canadian society automatically come back to the Treasury as sales tax and also as income tax, on family allowances for instance. So, everything should be considered in that light, in order not to scare Canadians with astronomical figures and then saying this has no sense.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) told us quite seriously this afternoon that over a number of years old age pensions doubled. That may be so. But other things have doubled in the meantime. So finally, there is no gain there.

In 1974, the gross national product in Canada, in inflationary figures, is \$140 billion, which, according to Statistics Canada, is equivalent to \$79 billion in 1961 dollars. On the other hand, in another table, it is said that the Canadian dollar has lost some of its value. According to the table I have here, the 1974 dollar is worth 60 cents, or 60 per cent of its 1961 value. These are all figures on which we must rely to establish the potential of Canada to help people in need.

There is another possibility; we do not have to invent it. The thousands of young people that we have had educated, for whom we have paid a lot of money, have not become an asset because they are unemployed. We should make some effort to try to allow these young people to enter the labour market, to increase the gross national product, instead of having it reduced as will be the case in 1975. If we do not bother about those young people who have diplomas and try to get them interested, to make them work, to create products to meet the needs of Canadian society, others will do so in our place, and we shall witness other investigations like the one that was held under Mr. Justice Cliche in the area of crime. We should also look into other areas where we shy away from investigating because these areas are headed by big shots. We are not afraid to upset the small fry, but we are more careful when it comes to upsetting the big shots.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is a good idea to try immediately to ensure income security for the people that I have mentioned, to allow the young people to enter

the labour market and contribute to the enrichment and development of our country. In this way, we shall not have to worry about paying higher pensions, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said this afternoon. He talked about \$300. I remember that at one time, when we, of the Social Credit Party, were talking about \$100, we were told that we were cranks, that it was utopian, that it made no sense. This afternoon, the minister told us that we have reached \$208, and that it is beginning to make sense. But it would also make sense at a higher level, where more persons will benefit from it, provided everything is done to improve and develop our economy, to increase our production, so that our standard of living might also rise. This will enable our youth to stop being professional loafers and become workers, to be an asset to the country, and our senior citizens will be able to enjoy life with a well deserved income security.

The minister said to us that within the near future, he will submit other legislation on behalf of the category of people I have just mentioned. I very seriously invite the minister to make an effort with a view to accelerating the submission of such a bill, because it is an urgent matter. And he may rest assured that in the same way as he received the support of all members this afternoon, he will also receive their support and cooperation to apply a guaranteed income insurance program that will enable Canadians to live in decent conditions and make the greatest possible use of this country which is ours and which we want to preserve for the present and future generations with laws that will always be based, as I said initially, on the Canadian family. Let us try to work together to reinforce the bounds as much as possible, to respect the rights of the Canadian family, to give this taste of living together, to be really close together at the end of the day, to talk during the evening about national issues, events of the day, but with people who breathe the same air, who eat at the same table, and not, as is the case at this moment, when our children are deserting the home to go and eat here and there, because we have not created a good family climate.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the state has a very large responsibility. As for us, members of parliament, we have to choose the right words when we pass any bill and, in this case, I suggest it would be advisable to review very seriously the section defining the "spouse" and to whom the pension should be paid.

So I hope that during consideration in committee we will study the matter more thoroughly and that the minister is willing to accept our bona fide suggestions so that we will soon pass the bill which will be enforced. The sooner, the better.

● (1630)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order. Before recognizing the minister, I remind the House that if the minister speaks now he will close the debate on this stage of the bill. Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.