

Old Age Security Act

include others who are not covered by the measure because this would require a change in the recommendation.

I think the Government House Leader . . . the Minister of National Health and Welfare should consider this aspect and change the Bill here in the House by providing a new royal recommendation, so that the Bill can be referred to committee in a form that is equitable and non-discriminatory.

Mr. Speaker, I warn the Government that we on this side of the House, and especially the Liberal Members, are looking into ways to ensure, by proposing amendments or through any other form of parliamentary action, that this Bill is changed, because although we are in favour of giving allowances to widows and widowers, we do not agree that people who are separated, single or divorced should be excluded. I warn the Government that this Bill will not be given an easy passage through Parliament unless the discriminatory aspects it contains are removed and this is done before the Bill goes to committee. Those were my comments, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Questions and comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Stackhouse: Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the passionate plea that the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault) made in his argument. It must have been very discouraging for him to make it in the name of the Liberal Party when no member of his Party was present until one came in during the last few minutes of his speech. Nonetheless, he made his speech with enthusiasm but I had to wonder why the enthusiasm was so long delayed.

He kept asking: Why is this benefit not extended to people who have suffered marriage breakdown or separation and living on their own? I suppose the answer could be, for the same reason his Government could not provide that benefit during the long years it was in office. The Canada Pension Plan has been in existence since the mid-1960s. It existed during years of government surpluses. Now we have a deficit. Yet during all the years of prosperity his Government enjoyed, it did not once expand this benefit to cover the people for whom he is now the self-appointed advocate.

We are doing our best as a Government, Mr. Speaker, during a time of great deficits. We could have a very strong case to make for not doing anything at all in view of the financial needs of the country. In spite of that, this Government is taking to heart the needs and claims of people in their sixties who require this kind of social assistance. Instead of ending his speech with the threat or warning he gave, I wish that, on behalf of those people, he might have ended with an assurance of support for this Bill.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed funny that the Hon. Member would have the nerve to rise in this House and accuse the Liberal Government of having done nothing for the elderly in this country. The seniors of this country know better than that. They know that successive Liberal Governments passed legislation for their benefit and

improved on that legislation year after year. What he is telling the seniors of this country in his remarks is simply that we are not going to do it because the Liberals did not do it. If that is his answer to the people of this country, let it stand on the record.

As far as we are concerned, we are doing our job in the Opposition. We are not on that side any more. If I was on that side I would plead for the seniors of this country, the same as I am doing here. But I am doing it from the place the electors of this country have given me.

The Conservatives accused us during the whole campaign of not doing right for years and now the Member is saying they are going to do just like the Liberals and not help the singles, divorced, the separated and so on. Let that be his stand, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stackhouse: Mr. Speaker, the fact is we are not taking a stand-pat policy. This Bill is taking us further, even further than the financial situation might justify if we wanted to take our stand there. We are going beyond those limits and taking this country into a social program where it could have been years ago if the Liberals had had that social consciousness when they had the opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, after listening to the remarks of the Hon. Member who has just spoken, I would like to make a comment and ask a question to my colleague. Obviously, he does not know anything about social issues. Among other things, he asked why the Liberal Government did not do anything.

I will enlighten the Hon. Member and tell him why the previous Liberal Government did not do anything for people living alone and aged 60 to 64. It is simply because, between 1980 and 1984, people aged 65 or more and living alone were below the poverty line and, unlike the Progressive Conservatives, the Liberals did not see any point in taking half the benefits from poor people to give them to other poor Canadians so that they would all be equally poor. The first thing to do would have been to use the guaranteed income supplement to increase the income of people aged 65—people living alone or couples. I would remind him that the Government raised the guaranteed income supplement by \$35 in 1980, \$17.50 for each spouse, and in the last budget there was another \$50 monthly increase in the guaranteed income supplement and the spouse's allowance for people living alone. I might also point out that, contrary to what the Hon. Member has just said, the Liberal Government promised during the election campaign that all needy individuals—married, couples or people living alone—would be eligible at age 64. That was a commitment.

It so happens that the Bill has been introduced by the Progressive Conservatives. The Hon. Member might honestly answer this question: Why would a widow suffer more hard-