

Honourable senators, what will be some of the results of this legislation? One will be the establishment in Ottawa and elsewhere throughout Canada of an additional bureaucracy which will not only deprive our country of the services of all these extra people from other useful and productive endeavours but will entail a further needless expenditure of public funds amounting to many millions of dollars. It may and likely will complicate further our present and proposed complicated relations with the Province of Quebec in the field of public welfare services.

Worst of all, it will re-establish a principle which was wholly—and I would have liked to think, permanently—rejected 16 years ago, in the field of federal old age pensions, namely, the principle of a means or a needs test, or whatever else one may wish to call it, in relation to a federal pension plan for the aged.

As I say, this principle of a means or needs test in regard to the Canadian plan was wholly and unanimously rejected by the Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee, which so assiduously studied this problem for practically two years during 1950 and 1951. And, as I say, that rejection was concurred in by Parliament, practically without dissent.

This bill also has the effect of breaching for the first time, as far as I am aware, the principle of the inviolability of information given in income tax returns. Where this may lead to, no one knows. To me this is simply another serious step in the constant erosion of the privacy and the freedom of the individual in this country.

I believe that nothing that I have said so far rejects the basic principles of the report of the Senate Committee on Aging, in so far as the needs of some people are concerned. This point has been fully explained by my colleague, Senator Grosart, and I will not repeat his argument.

On the contrary, I believe that the course of wisdom would have been for a continuous and indeed scientific adjustment of payments made under the universal old age pension plan, thereafter leaving it in the hands of the provinces and municipalities to operate assistance schemes on the basis of means or needs as required by the circumstances of certain people who may be afflicted with undue poverty.

In the light of these remarks, I sincerely believe that, even if the cost to the public treasury should be somewhat increased at the moment, it would have been highly preferable to raise the universal old age pension to \$100

for the present, allowing for adjustments upwards in, say, five-year periods, based upon the gross national product from time to time, and combined with considerations relative to the cost of living.

Honourable senators, what will be the effect of this legislation on the old age pensioner? First, I believe there will be thousands of marginal cases where personal judgments of government employees will be required to decide who are eligible and who are not. One can appreciate the personal conflict and difficulty that will be involved with individuals in regard to this phase of need or means.

Secondly, a vital principle of administration of the income tax laws will have to be violated, namely, as I said a moment ago, the granting of access to outsiders, that is, to people from another department, to private income tax records.

Besides this, there will be employed an army of civil servants who will inevitably be termed snoopers, whether they are or not—and they are already being termed “snoopers”—and the amount of animosity and ill-will created will be without measure.

Furthermore, there will be no end to the number of marginal cases, those who will make it their business to divest themselves of their savings and other property to their children or relatives, and who will indeed pauperize themselves in order to qualify for the supplementary pension. Also pensioners in good health who now try to earn a few dollars each day, week or month, will discontinue these employments. This system will encourage idleness and indolence to a degree that may shock us all.

Honourable senators, for these and other reasons too many to dwell upon, it is my sincere conviction that this legislation should not be passed, but that in the alternative our universal old age pension system should be continued unimpaired.

Now, honourable senators, having made these remarks on Bill C-251, may I offer Christmas greetings to everyone here.

On the question of sending this bill to a committee, may I add that we are all aware that this bill has been in the other place for a long time and has been debated at length both on second reading and in committee of the whole, and we on this side see no good purpose at this late date for sending it to committee here.