

Old Age Security Act Amendment

back to the treasury. A number of investigations have been carried out demonstrating that virtually all the money received by the old age pensioners is immediately spent on rent, food, clothing, drugs and other necessities. It does not go into speculative investments; it cannot be salted away in savings accounts. How much of it comes back from other people such as landlords and merchants? It must be a very large figure indeed because the minister mentioned that the cost of old age pensions would reach \$2 billion by 1970. The fact is that the \$2 billion will be spent and not hoarded and, being spent, it will provide income for other people in the country who in turn will pay back a large proportion of it by way of income tax.

Let us be realistic and not pretend that this is just an added weight foisted upon the working population of this country. The minister used this argument when he said that the present scheme will cost \$260 million to \$280 million but that if our proposal were adopted the amount would go up by another \$100 million or \$200 million and in this way an increasing mountain of debt would be imposed on the working population of this country. He should modify these figures by showing how much of this sum will come back by way of income tax and by way of the other taxes which Canadians have to pay—and there are other taxes. I think this really alters the picture, and the minister is the one person who should put it in the right perspective. He is the man charged with the responsibility of administering a scheme on behalf of the old age pensioners of this country to provide for them in their old age. He should be the one to inform the people of Canada and the members of this house how large or how small the burden is in respect of taxation. Instead he takes the other point of view and tries to build up a big bogey and frighten us all to death.

● (8:20 p.m.)

The minister says that we cannot afford any more money for our old age pensioners, that we are trying to stretch our dollars in order that we can look after those who are in more serious need than others. This is not an attitude that should be adopted by the Minister of National Health and Welfare; that is the function of the Minister of Finance. He is the one who always has to preach blue ruin, doom and gloom. The Minister of National Health and Welfare should be doing everything in his power to make life more comfortable for the people who come under his care, and the

people who come under his care are those people who are in receipt of the old age pension.

The minister is not forward-looking at all. I pointed out the nature and attitude of the minister who held that office in 1951, a forward-looking minister who was very active in promoting the proposition which was unanimously adopted by the house and which favoured the old age pensioner, and rightly so. Here we have a reactionary minister who is not in the forefront of social reform by any means. This man is leading the retreat from Moscow. He has given up. He has ambitions, of course, but they are not being furthered by the attitude he is showing now with regard to this legislation.

This minister is saddling the Liberal party, though I should not warn them, of course, with a political problem that will not be very easily solved by them. All their talk about being the great party of social reform is being whittled away and undermined by the activity of the present minister of National Health and Welfare, in marked contrast to the activity of other Liberal ministers of health and welfare.

So, Mr. Chairman, I ask the minister to give us a rosier picture of the cost of the old age security pension instead of this picture of doom and gloom which depicts every additional \$10 per month paid to the old age pensioner as placing an extra burden on our shoulders. Let the Minister of Finance talk like that. That is what ministers of finance like to do; they are always preaching that kind of gospel and scaring the people.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare should be pressing on on behalf of the people for whom he bears such a responsibility. Instead he is taking this backward step and is now going to humiliate at least half a million of the older people of this country by the proposal that he has placed in this bill. This is what we are objecting to.

The minister is, of course, going to gloat a little later on because he is going to say that no one in this house really opposed the increase for the old age pensioners. Of course no one is going to oppose helping those who need help, even by means of the unsatisfactory method that the minister has adopted. It is really too bad when we vote on measures in this house that we cannot record the fact that we are voting for them not because we like the method that is being pursued but because we want to do something on behalf of those who require assistance.