

benefit. Why can't the aged be more involved in the operation of homes for the aged? The revolution against paternalism is now well advanced on the university campus. The students are no longer ready to have handed down to them an education which the university fathers feel is best for them. They insist on being involved . . . It is therefore high time that the aged assert clearly and forthrightly that they too want to be masters of their own destiny. They should make it perfectly clear that they too have human rights which must be protected and enhanced, and that these rights are more than a pension sufficient to keep body and soul together. They include the right to dignity and self-respect. In many cases, to protect these rights, they must have the opportunity to continue to make meaningful contributions to society. The decision as to when, how, and how long an individual should continue to participate in the mainstream of society must be made by that individual, and not by some computer clock which "rings down the curtain" at age 65.

Mr. Andy Hogan (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill because I am so well aware of how terribly difficult it is for most senior citizens to live on what is provided for them now. It is difficult especially for them at a time when there is an increase in the cost of living on a year to year basis of 9.5 per cent. They despair when they see the cost of living increase to some 11.5 per cent, which is what happened during the last three months.

The basic amount of old age security is presently up to a little over \$150 per month, and there is a \$105 per month guaranteed income supplement for those who have nothing to live on. Therefore, \$150 a month is paid to everyone 65 years of age or over, and \$255 is paid to those who have the supplement. During these times of very high cost of living, the least one could hope for is an increase in the basic amount of old age security from \$200 a month during this year, with a goal of \$250 or \$300 by 1980.

The guaranteed income supplement should be raised also this year to at least \$130 a month, with a goal of \$175 by 1982. This would be no great fiscal or financial burden on the nation, since the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) has indicated that the growth in real terms this year will be 5 per cent. These figures would be the minimum amount of rough justice the younger citizens of Canada owe to older people who are no longer in the labour force. Just as young union employees are often hesitant to vote for increases in the pension plan under the collective bargaining process and prefer immediate wages, we find creeping into our social thinking the notion that the nation is doing about as well as it can for those citizens who built this country during extremely trying times and suffered greatly during the depression and wars.

There are a great number of senior citizens, some of whom are veterans of World War I and others veterans of World War II. On June 28, 1973 royal assent was given to Bill C-202, which provided for an increase in the basic war disability pension to an amount equivalent to the composite of five public service categories. At that time it was felt that the Department of Veterans Affairs finally had arrived at an equitable basic rate of pension. A recent announcement by that department indicated an increase of 7.2 per cent. That fails to fulfil the spirit of the legislation passed in June of 1973, because the government did not repeal section 58.1 and 58.2 of the Pension Act. Bill C-202 increased the basic rate for veterans in an amount which was equal to the average wages of the composite group I have referred to. However, the

provision remained in the Pension Act for increases in the years following the approval of Bill C-202 to be based only on the Consumer Price Index.

In comparing the basic rate of pension of a war disability pensioner, who is totally disabled, with the average wages for the composite group of five in the Public Service of Canada, there is a differential of approximately \$600 to \$700 on a yearly basis in favour of public servants. The government should take steps this year to close this differential, if it has any sense of gratitude for the veterans. Whether the government uses this during a political campaign or not is of little importance; the fairness and the spirit of the June 1973 legislation should be adhered to by the government.

A few weeks ago I was surprised to hear the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) say, in reply to a question before the House, that the spouse's allowance providing for a payment to either a man or woman between the ages of 60 and 65 would apply only to a spouse who is married to, or living with, an older pensioner and would not be changed to include single people, whether widowed or unmarried. This is completely ridiculous when one considers that the total cost of including these categories would be approximately \$4 million a year.

Recently in my constituency office a spinster, who was 62 years of age, said: "If I lived in a common law marriage with someone, I could get this allowance". People feel incensed about this kind of discrimination with regard to the present spouse's allowances. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), in answering the question, said that one of the reasons for her refusal to include these people would be national pressure to reduce to 60 the age at which old age security benefits are granted, and she said that the government could not afford that. This is a lame excuse for not including the above categories of people who are now being discriminated against.

● (1632)

Like Sweden, Canada should have a national study which would embrace the notion that people should be allowed to retire at various pension levels between the ages of 60 and 70, if not 75. Many senior citizens in Canada, including women who are heads of households, are suffering badly under our national and provincial assistance system. The low income groups in this country, such as, for example, the bottom 20 per cent of our income earners, receive only 4.4 per cent of our national pie, called the GNP, while the top 20 per cent skim some 40 per cent off that pie. That should concern us as parliamentarians and we should determine to really do something about it. I do not care if it is done in an election year or at another time. There is a great need for us as Canadians to provide a sufficient income for senior citizens who have done so much for this nation. Let us as parliamentarians accept the responsibility for bringing in needed reforms, not next year or the following year, but now, in 1978.

Mr. Wm. Andres (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have