

*Old Age Security Act*

over the past ten years under the administration of the right hon. Mr. Pearson and of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) are unequalled in any country of the free world.

When the Liberals came back to power in 1963, the pension was \$65 a month for persons aged 70 or more. Let us consider the progress achieved and this, without any help from Social Credit.

First, Mr. Speaker, we have increased the pension to \$75, and afterward to \$80 a month, for all pensioners.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order. I would not wish to restrict the Parliamentary Secretary in his comments, but I wonder to what extent they have to do with the bill we are now considering. Sometimes, in similar circumstances, the Chair allows a lot of leeway to hon. members with regard to the subject-matter of the act to be amended, but, in the present case, as the debate is limited to one hour and as the Chair knows that many other hon. members would like to have the floor before the question is put, I would like the Parliamentary Secretary to come back as soon as possible to the bill under study.

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I said that I would be brief, but I feel that it is important, following the stupidities said in the House, especially by the Créditistes, to recall the facts and to show that the Liberal party has never hesitated to help the aged when the time had come for doing so.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we established a new plan to grant a supplement to pensioners who have no other resources for their retirement.

This amount at first was \$30; we increased it to \$55 and now it will go up to \$70 for single persons and \$125 for couples. Thus, 550,000 pensioners will now receive \$150 a month.

We have lowered the age of eligibility for old age security pensions from 70 to 65.

We have financed—this hon. members of the Social Credit party do not mention—through the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation the building of thousands of homes and units for older Canadians.

We have also made sure that the major part of the burden of health preservation, an essential condition for happy retirement years, does not bear only on senior citizens, through the medicare and Canada assistance plans.

Mr. Speaker, we established the Canada Pension Plan and its equivalent in Quebec in order to guarantee a supplementary pension for Canadian workers—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. Once again, I have to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary. He could make this kind of speech during the debate on the budget or when the next session opens or at any other moment. He must understand that we are now considering a bill amending the Old Age Security Act and that this remarks should be limited to the bill before us and to its amendments.

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss some clauses of Bill C-207 which I consider extremely important.

We will be offering to Canadians additional protection by allowing them to deduct for income tax purposes, up to \$2,500 a year, their contribution to a registered retirement plan.

We have also raised up to \$1,000 the special exemption for income tax purposes granted to any person 65 years old or older and to any blind or disabled taxpayer. This means that nearly one third of the pensioners will not have to pay income tax, and that all the others will be paying much less.

Another important aspect of the measures we are recommending for the elderly is the recognition of the fact that reaching a certain age does not necessarily mean that a person is unable to make a useful contribution to our society. Several Canadians aged 65 and over have talents and skills which we want to develop, not only to give their lives some meaning, but also because we want to profit from the skills of these people. This is why we are going to launch the New Horizons program which will enable older people to fully participate in community life.

• (1520)

Mr. Speaker, as a conclusion on this very impressive achievement, I would like to say that, when the present government was elected in 1968, the annual maximum level of pensions was \$1,285 for single persons and \$2,570 for married couples. In 1971, these figures were upped to \$1,620 and \$3,060. Presently, in 1972, they are increased once more to \$1,800 and \$3,420. These are important and significant increases over a period of two years.

These payments, Mr. Speaker, can be favourably compared with others in any other country of the western world. Let's make a few comparisons together.

**Mr. Caouette:** Go and tell that to René Lévesque.

**Mr. Ouellet:** The maximum yearly amount paid in a country like Great Britain, for example, is \$1,300 for a bachelor and \$2,200 for a couple.

In the United States, these yearly amounts are \$1,649 for a bachelor and \$2,428 for a couple.

On the other hand, the maximum yearly amount paid in Scandinavian countries which are supposedly very progressive in the social field, is far lower than in Canada. Let us, for instance, take the case of Denmark where a bachelor draws \$1,245 and a couple \$1,868. Sweden is also far behind Canada in this respect. A bachelor in that country draws \$1,200 and a couple \$1,867.

I would like to suggest, Mr. Speaker, to those who are beset by constitutional qualms, as is the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte), for example, who joined in the debate yesterday and whom I would qualify as a separatist in disguise, that the federal government is absolutely justified in helping Canada's pensioners and particularly those of Quebec.

There are now 422,000 Quebecers aged 65 years and over who draw the old age security pension. Of this number, 258,600 receive the guaranteed income supplement. During 1971-72, old age security pensions paid to Quebecers amounted to \$400 million while the guaranteed income supplement was \$146 million.