Old Age Security Act

The bill before us concerns Canadians, many of whom suffered the effects of two world wars and the worst depression in world history. Many of them have become self-sufficient, and have been able to acquire sufficient resources of their own to see them through the years of their retirement. However, thousands of Canadians who have retired in the last few months are finding their life savings so badly eroded by inflation that a few dollars can make the difference between comfortable retirement and a bare existence. Had the escalation clause in this legislation been linked directly to the cost of living, the basic pension would now be $90.53. In other words, recipients will still be eight dollars short of the sum they should actually be receiving each month, notwithstanding the minister's own view that in arriving at the amount of old age security payments the cost of living is a necessary criterion.

As I say, we sometimes wonder whether history is not repeating itself. In 1957, $6 was given under this legislation.. Today, it is $8. The legislation still falls short. I realize that on July 1 an old age pensioner will receive a cheque for $97.28. However, on August 1st his cheque will be reduced to $82.88. In other words, he will get a bonus for one month. I do not know how near we are to an election, but I feel recipients of old age security payments will not be led astray by this attempt to bribe them with their own money, money which was due to them many months ago. According to the minister, this concession will cost an additional $166 million. Looked at within the whole spectrum of social security spending, which is within the neighborhood of $5 billion, this is not such a large sum. I say to the minister: Think again, and amend the legislation further, even at this late stage in such a way as to bring the basic old age security pension up to at least $90.53, the amount pensioners should be receiving had the escalation clause been instituted in 1967 when the pension was set at $75.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I was anxious to comment briefly on the amendments moved by our colleague the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) to the effect that old age security pensions provided by Bill C-207 be increased.

Mr. Speaker, we attempted, yesterday, through an amendment, to express a different way of looking at old age security pensions. One of these motions provided for the payment of these pensions at age 60, rather than 65. The second aimed at extending the old age income security provision to persons less than 60 years, of age provided the spouse has reached the prescribed statutory age of 60.

It is known that the bill introduced by the minister provides for old age security pensions to be paid at 65, while we would like them to be payable at 60.

A third motion followed and aimed at the total cancellation of the guaranteed income supplement which is nothing but administrative "tampering" that is extremely costly and gives practically nothing more to senior citizens. Later I shall quote figures to clarify this point.

We ask that the guaranteed income supplement be cancelled, and that $200 a month be paid all senior citizens, and this without inquiries, administrative manipulations,

[Mr. Howe.]

forms or complex calculations, such as Bill C-207 proposes.

It has been said that those motions entailed expenditures of public money—

● (1550)

[*English*]

Mr. Munro: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I do not wish to offend the hon. member and I would be interested to hear his remarks, which seem to be about his party's policy with respect to this legislation, more appropriately on third reading if the hon. member wishes to expound his philosophy again. However, in respect of this amendment I understand that the rules of relevancy apply, and I fail to see how his remarks relate to the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The point raised by the minister is well taken. At the time the minister rose the Chair was examining the bill and amendment, while hoping that the hon. member would bring his remarks to bear on the amendment itself, which did not seem to be the case.

[*Translation*]

When the minister rose on a point of order, the Chair was in the process of studying the clause of the bill and the amendment, and felt that the hon. member was digressing from the subject before the House, namely the amendment at the report stage, to which the rule of relevancy applies specifically and stipulates that the debate must bear formally on the amendment and the clause before the House.

Obviously, the Chair cannot, under the circumstances, prevent the hon. member for Lotbinière from rising and making opening remarks but, I wonder, whether in so doing he did not digress, and whether he should not keep his remarks for the debate on third reading; I would invite him, for the time being and if at all possible, to stick to the amendment and the clause before the House.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to offend you or the Minister of National Health and Welfare (M. Munro) but as I maintain that my remarks pertain to the amendments moved by the hon. member for Simcoe North which provide for an increase in certains amounts provided for in the act; my opinions refer to them. That is why—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. The Chair regrets to have to interrupt again the hon. member, but I want to remind him that the House is considering but one of the amendments moved by the hon. member for Simcoe North, that is Motion No. 6, which proposes to strike out, on page 2 of the Bill, the word "is" and substitute the words "shall not be less than". Therefore, this is a very specific and rather restrictive amendment.

I find it difficult to allow the hon. member to carry on with his comments on amendment No. 7, which is not yet before the House at this time.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I must say again I can hardly understand your explanations. I shall read the amendment moved by the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) so that you may be sure that I know what it is about: