

Old Age Security Act Amendment

it does not propose changes before the next election, it will probably go into the next election promising that it will make changes. One of the promises I think this government will make, even if it does so under pressure, will be that it will remove the income test as the Liberals call it, or the means test as the Canadian people call it, from the extra \$30.

If this does not happen at the next election, it will happen in a matter of a few years. Canada will not be satisfied with this five-part confusion which we have built up with respect to old age security. We could simplify it. Time will take care of the Old Age Assistance Act as the eligible age for old age security comes down to 65. The Canada Assistance Plan is mainly a plan for other areas of social need. If we were to take the proposal that is before us tonight and incorporate it into the basic old age security pension, we would be back basically to a two-part plan—on the one hand a flat-rate benefit, and on the other the earnings related benefit in the Canada Pension Plan.

I believe that those two schemes, if given the chance to work together as they ought to, would produce a good pension package. My theory is that this fiddling around we are doing with supplementary means test payments, with the Canada Assistance Plan and old age assistance, is unfair to the principles of the Canada Pension Plan in that the legislation this government brought in is being interfered with by this kind of arrangement.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is my earnest plea to the government to take one more look at this matter before it asks us to give third reading to this bill in its present form. I could go over all the points about this bill that were gone into on second reading and in committee of the whole. I will not do so. I could read, if there was plenty of time, the mail I have been receiving in the last few days from people who are horrified and mystified by this arrangement, who cannot understand why the principle of the last 15 years cannot be continued. I will not do that tonight. I have such letters by the score upstairs.

I am making my appeal to the government on the basis of its own approach. I believe there was a time when the Liberals who now occupy the government benches felt that we had to do something to improve the old age security system and they came up with the idea of the Canada Pension Plan. If they had just put more thought into making these two plans work together or making them fit into

[Mr. Knowles.]

each other, instead of coming up with the hodge-podge of a jungle that we now have, we would have something of which we could be proud. The document from the Liberal federation that I had here last night ended with the sentence that the means test supplement in the proposed scheme is a plan of which Liberals can be proud. I do not think that the Liberals who tried to build up the pension program in the days when they were on this side of the house, who tried to improve the pension picture in this country, are proud of what they have now achieved, namely, this five-part jungle of old age security, old age assistance, the Canada Assistance Plan, the Canada Pension Plan and the \$30 means test supplement. This is not worthy of the parliament of Canada in the 1960's. We can do a great deal better, and we can start on that road tonight by saying here in this House of Commons that we are not going to go for confusing the situation by building this means test into the pensions which our senior citizens receive.

● (8:40 p.m.)

Therefore I urge that before we take the vote on third reading the government think seriously about this matter. As I said, I will give effect to this appeal by making the appropriate amendment on third reading and I hope that the government will consider my suggestion that a vote on it is not necessary if the government is prepared to bring in a simple bill amending the Old Age Security Act and raising the pension to \$105 a month. I say to the government that if it is not prepared to do it tonight, if it is not prepared to do it at this session, it will be done some day by the parliament of Canada. If this is the case, then why not do it now so that the older people today will enjoy the dignity and self-respect of a pension free of any test and so that Canada will continue to be a country with a pension plan which respects the rights and the dignity of our older people?

Therefore I move, seconded by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis):

That Bill C-251 be not now read a third time, but that it be referred back to the committee of the whole house for the purpose of reconsidering the income test provided in clause 3 thereof.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that I have drafted this amendment in line with citation 415 on page 287 of Beauchesne's fourth edition, and other citations immediately thereafter. Under our rules we are entitled on third reading to ask for reconsideration of a matter with which we have dealt in committee. I ask