

Old Age Security

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, if I may be permitted to do so, I should be very happy to answer this question. First, there never has been a motion before the house that was moved in such a way that the passage of it would have had the effect of increasing the old age pension. The right hon. gentleman knows this. Since we have never had a proper motion moved, we never have voted against an increase in the old age pension.

An hon. Member: You did so.

Mr. Olson: What we voted against, Mr. Speaker, was a motion of this house last year—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. At this point, I wonder whether we might concern ourselves with the very limited point of procedure which is before the house.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to make the point that if the right hon. gentleman had the right to ask the question I should have the right to reply.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, if there is any further answer that the hon. gentleman should like to make or any alibi he wishes to make, I am sure the house will grant him the opportunity.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I offer no alibi. In fact, I offer no apology to anyone in this house or in Canada for assuming the responsibility of carrying out responsible government. I would consider it a very irresponsible act, within the first ten days of sitting to dissolve a parliament which just had been elected by the people of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in compliance with your request, I should like to return to the point of order. We have on the order paper, and it has been there for two days, a resolution properly introduced by the Minister of National Health and Welfare who has the constitutional and procedural authority to move such a motion.

When this resolution comes before this parliament, if there are any conditions or provisions contained therein upon which the members of the opposition wish to move amendments, they will have the opportunity at that time to do so. The most effective way, and the most immediate way to put an increase into the hands of the old age pensioners in this country is to deal with the legislation which is sponsored by the government, because that is the only kind of legislation which in fact can be a charge on the public treasury.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, first I should like to deal with the point made by the hon. member for Medicine Hat that when the motion which will follow item No. 111 on the order paper comes before this house the opposition will have the right to move such amendments as may give effect to the latter part of the amendment now moved by the hon. member for Grey-Bruce. Any motion along that line undoubtedly would have the effect of disturbing the balance of ways and means. Any attempt to do so at that time almost certainly would be met with the argument that the opposition, by so doing, would be disturbing the balance of ways and means.

At a later date the Minister of Finance proposes to bring in a budget based on this legislation. The kind of budget he will bring in will be determined of course, by the government bill which finally passes this house. Consequently, it would be inevitable that the amount of money which he would be requesting would be changed as a result of the acceptance of an amendment of the kind which is now proposed if it were moved during the consideration of the legislation. I submit that Your Honour would be bound to reject it. The only opportunity we have is the course which has been taken by the hon. member for Grey-Bruce.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat also made the point that the method and means by which this increase would be made is a matter of detail. I suggest it is far more than that. According to your admonition, sir, I am addressing myself to the narrow issue of order which you will decide. It is far more than a detail; this is the pith and substance of the whole amendment. If it were a matter of debate in this house, whether or not there should be an old age pension, I doubt that there would be any debate at all.

It is the method by which this is to be achieved, and the extent to which a means test or a needs test will be involved, that is the substance of this particular amendment moved by the hon. member for Grey-Bruce. What we have by the adoption of the words is a suggestion that there should be an immediate increase to all the recipients of old age security. Surely, Your Honour can take almost judicial notice of the fact that there will be exchanges back and forth across this house not as to whether or not there should be an increase in old age pensions, but as to whether or not those increases should be accompanied by a means test or a needs test. This is what the debate is about. This is what the hon.