

Old Age Security

\$80 a month to all because they contend there is a contract and these people expect this payment. I maintain there are many people in this country making \$10,000 a year, which is by no means a magic figure, who have been led to expect over the years that their family allowance payment would continue. When the minister speaks again, perhaps he will try to clear up this point without resorting to the old argument that there is a contract, because I do not buy that argument. People who have been receiving family allowance have just as much right to look forward to its continuation, and I am sure there are many more cases of need in that group than in the case of some people who will continue to receive \$80 a month in old age security.

If the government adopts the position that there will be no cut-off point, then you cannot make chalk of one and cheese of the other. Obviously, many hundreds of thousands of people in this country do not need this \$80, and if this is going to be the philosophy of the government, let it be so. I do not know whether if this payment is cut out, the minister is worried about getting the measure through the other chamber, because I imagine that the majority of its members have reached the age to qualify for this benefit. Nevertheless, there are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who do not need this payment. We had an example of this yesterday from an hon. member who will not hear of any increase in pay for Members of Parliament. Obviously he does not need it, though he has reached the age where he receives it. I am also sure the former Prime Minister does not need it. However, I am not pinpointing these people; my point is that there are numerous people who do not need it.

Perhaps the minister would use his research facilities to tell me whether this payment of \$80 would be made even if there were a reasonable break-off point. Perhaps having \$50,000 or \$70,000 in the bank would be a reasonable break-off point. I am not suggesting that ordinary people should be excluded, but I should like to know how much saving there would be if people who did not need it were not given this benefit.

There are many inconsistencies in this regard. For example, some mothers will receive under the new proposal almost three times the family allowance that they received hitherto; the payment is being increased from \$6 to \$16 a month. I know these youngsters have their whole voting life ahead of them but I do not think this should be a factor. On the other hand, we give our elderly people a big deal—an increase of from \$111.41 to \$135, which is \$24 or, about 20 per cent. On the other side of the coin, in some cases family allowance payments are increased by almost 300 per cent. As I say, there is no consistency.

I think ways and means should be devised to give our elderly citizens a real break, and again I emphasize that it should be given to those who really need it. Married pensioners may have to maintain a family. Many must maintain a home. They have all sorts of extra payments to meet that younger people do not have, such as special drug preparations for which they have to pay the same price as anybody else. We should forget that they will

[Mr. Peddle.]

not be around to bother us much longer, and give them a real break now.

In its white paper, the government recognizes that a simple pensioner should not receive just half what a married pensioner receives; proportionately he is paid a little more. Although the government recognize that a single pensioner is single they made no recognition of the fact that a married pensioner is married, unless his spouse also is a pensioner. In other words, a married pensioner under this proposal will receive the same as a single pensioner if his wife is, say, only 62 or 63.

I am aware that under the old age assistance and social assistance schemes people in various provinces can apply for special assistance. As the minister has mentioned, the federal government wishes at the earliest opportunity to enter into discussions with the provincial government with a view to securing improvements in social assistance programs. I do not know whether this would be possible, but I should like the minister to give us some kind of assurance that in cases where pensioners have wives who are beyond the age where they can earn money, say 62 or 63, but below the qualifying age of 65, a provincial supplement will be paid that will bring the income of this married couple up to \$255 a month. Otherwise, I think the minister and the government would be creating an unjust situation.

If the provincial governments agreed only to bring cases of this sort up to an income level of, say, \$198 a month, I think this too would be unfair. There must be recognition of the fact that a married pensioner is married and is responsible for maintaining a wife and perhaps children or other dependants. There is no recognition of this in the white paper or in this bill. In the interest of such cases as these, I should like to have an assurance from the minister that a formula will be worked out along the line I have suggested.

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take a few moments to comment briefly on Bill C-202 which is now before the House and to bring a few points to the attention of those who will be on the committee studying the bill after it receives second reading. I am at a loss to know why the government delayed so long before introducing this measure. There does not seem to have been any very just cause for this. I am also at a loss to know why the bill is not broader and more comprehensive in its outline. We were looking forward to something of much broader scope, a measure that would include not only welfare adjustments but perhaps an incentive to work program.

It is also difficult to understand why people aged 65 and over with a small income of just over \$110 a month should have their old age security payments frozen at \$80 a month. This brings to mind a very good cartoon that appeared in the *Guelph Daily Mercury*. It shows a senior citizen at a stamp wicket in a post office. In one hand he is holding a newspaper in which there is the headline "Old age pensions to be increased by forty-two cents". He is turning to the person in charge of the wicket and