

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

I received this morning a report from a local meeting on political matters in another city adjacent to this. It indicated that the hon. member would raise this point, and why he would. If there is any political background in this matter, it is in the hon. member's ambitions with respect to some elections he expects in the near future.

Mr. Grégoire: That is not an acceptable answer. This is patronage.

OLD AGE ASSISTANCE—BRITISH COLUMBIA—
DENIAL TO OLD AGE PENSIONERS OF
PROVINCIAL SUPPLEMENT

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I tried to draw to the attention of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) the situation in British Columbia where very large numbers of old age pensioners are being denied the full benefit of the \$30 supplementary allowance which has been established recently. This evening I wish to read a form which is being sent out to old age security pensioners who also receive the present provincial government supplementary allowance, which amounts to a maximum of \$30. This form is being received throughout British Columbia and it reads as follows:

To: present recipients of supplementary social allowance to their old age security pension, February 20, 1967:

1. In the month you receive a retroactive payment of the federal government guaranteed income supplement, your provincial government will also pay the provincial portion of the supplementary social allowance you received heretofore.

2. In subsequent months, the amount of the provincial government supplementary social allowance to which you will be entitled will be based on your actual needs in accordance with the information shown on your file. If further information is required, you will be contacted either by mail or by a social worker.

3. It is regretted that this review has to be made, but it is due to the fact that the federal government would not agree to exempt the guaranteed income supplement when determining entitlement to supplementary social allowance.

4. Receipt of the guaranteed income supplement, however, will not affect your health services and the medical card you presently hold will continue to be valid unless you are notified to the contrary.

I would point out that the over-all effect of these principles will mean that thousands of both single and married pensioners will not receive the full benefit of the new \$30 federal allowance. What the federal government gives them on the one hand will be taken away by the provincial government on the other.

We find that the federal and the provincial governments are blaming each other. Undoubtedly both are correct in doing so. However, the initial responsibility must rest with Ottawa for a number of reasons. Last fall there was a situation where the old age pension was very far from meeting the needs of the old age pensioners, and obviously something had to be done. The government had been warned by many agencies, including the committee on aging, a year ago last January, that the very least that was necessary for a decent income for a single person living on old age pension was \$138. All the government needed to do was to make an across the board increase under the old age security legislation of 1951 with no questions asked and no strings attached, and of course it would take back in income tax what was not needed. It was not a case of giving to millionaires; it was a simple giving out to those people who needed it and taking back in the regular form of income tax from people who did not need it. However at that time the government was anxious to prove itself guiltless of imposing a means test. It used fancy language of all kinds and it prostituted the term "guaranteed income" which, it had no business using.

The government was so anxious to prove itself guiltless of a means test that it established very complicated means test regulations. I have been going through them and I do not see for the life of me how old people can be expected to understand how to work out those things by themselves. Most of their neighbours and friends, to say nothing of some of their members of parliament, would be hard put to it to explain all the complications to the elderly people.

• (10:20 p.m.)

In addition to making these elaborate means test regulations, the federal government failed to do what it should have done, and what was vitally necessary, that is to hold talks with the provinces to make sure that the provincial supplement would not be diminished when the federal supplement was given. Some of us drew this to the attention of the government at the time. I pointed out that it was most essential to know that the provincial supplement would not be withdrawn. At the time, we had no satisfactory reply from the federal government. The federal government took no care to see to it, when it gave the supplement, that it was geared to the real income needs of the elderly people.

In addition to that, of course, the mini-budget added to the discomfort of elderly