

Old Age Security Act

must remember that it was the Liberal party of Great Britain which was the originator of the social security program in that country, and it was the Liberal party in this country which brought in old age pensions and other social legislation.

I support the bill, but I would like it to go somewhat further. I would like to see the \$20 which is to go to people on the guaranteed income supplement extended to everyone who receives old age pensions. About 20 per cent of the people of my constituency are senior citizens. Many of them live in their own homes or in rental accommodation. Most of them do not live in housing for senior citizens supplied by the state, in this case the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority.

Housing for senior citizens in metropolitan Toronto is probably second to none anywhere in the country. Metropolitan Toronto has a good program. There are good housing units there, but not everyone chooses to live in senior citizen accommodation. Thousands of people prefer to stay in their own homes or in apartments. That encourages a sense of independence and non-reliance on the state or other people. I think it is beneficial to the state that many people do remain in their own homes. The party opposite is always conscious of dollars and cents, and I suggest that by encouraging people to stay in their own homes or in rental accommodation we encourage a saving to the state because federal and provincial governments build senior citizen housing.

However, there is one problem with senior citizens who wish to stay in their own homes, and that is that with increasing inflation and especially increasing property taxes people are being driven out.

● (1652)

I should like to explore an avenue which is related to something brought up recently by the Conservative party in the by-elections. As the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton said, the Conservative party is concerned about social security and the state of our old people. In the by-election campaign, that party introduced a scheme of mortgage deductibility. Yesterday the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi (Mr. Graffey) castigated the Liberal party and referred to this scheme which makes the Conservative party the sheriff of Nottingham of today—those people who plunder the poor to give to the rich. That party would be well advised not to think of mortgage deductibility for upper middle income Canadians, but of course that is the vote they are after. They should consider a scheme whereby senior citizens would receive some form of tax credit to assist them in remaining in their own homes, a tax credit related to their property taxes.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Collenette: The government of Ontario has such a scheme. It is a good one, but it does not go far enough. There is no reason why this scheme should not be extended right across the country. I am not a tax expert so I will not go into any great detail.

When the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) brings down his budget in a few weeks, I urge him to take into account the

[Mr. Collenette.]

plight of people who although they may have a few thousand dollars in the bank, live in their own homes or rental accommodation but are being squeezed out of their homes and losing their sense of independence. Perhaps many people want to move into senior citizens' accommodation and nursing homes, but the majority would like to stay where they belong, where they lived all their lives, to encourage this sense of independence.

Such a tax credit scheme to aid senior citizens would be supported in the House. Certainly it is a progressive scheme; it is a Liberal one. It does not go along with the charade of a scheme introduced by hon. members opposite. Their scheme is punitive and would give undue benefit to those who least need help.

As I said earlier, the increase of \$20 a month should be applied right across the board. In fact, if it can be afforded this year, it should be doubled.

Further to what the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) said, the old age security system should be available to anyone after age 60.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Hear, hear!

Mr. Collenette: The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) indicated that there are people who want to continue working. They should have that right to continue or choose whether they want to receive the benefits of old age security. Even though many people know it is their due, they do not like to admit, at the ages of 65, 66 or 67, that perhaps their usefulness to society is over. I can understand that. If they want to continue working, they should be encouraged to do so.

But there are many others who would appreciate pension benefits at age 60. I am referring to people who worked in labour intensive industries with their bare hands. For example, a mine worker at Inco, a worker at a uranium mine, a fisherman, forest worker, outdoor worker or a construction worker perhaps does the work of two people in his lifetime because of the physical toll taken by his jobs. With all the technological advances and the relative wealth of society in 1978, it is a crime that these people do not have the option of receiving the old age pension at 60 when they start to wear out, if you will. I recognize the plight of the government in terms of expenditure, yet I would like to see these programs go further.

The hon. member for Davenport alluded to the theme of the duplicity of the Conservative party. The Conservatives in metropolitan Toronto are preaching restraint. They are the Sterling Lyons of Ontario. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) and other members from the maritimes have a genuine concern for the plight of the less favoured regions of Canada. They come to the House and attempt to come to grips with statements made by their colleagues elsewhere. I feel sorry for them and their party because they will never resolve these differences; their positions are so rigid.