

Old Age Security Act

modesty, I am always pleased when somebody quotes my words and enables them to adorn *Hansard* for a second day. I should remind the minister, however, that at the time that I said we must move on this matter, I also said that if we could find any way that was procedurally proper, whereby we could bring about an improvement in the situation, I would support anyone who would bring forward such a suggestion. On the other hand, I would not think of gumming-up any parliamentary procedure with an amendment which I do not think to be proper.

Mr. Baldwin: Me, too.

Mr. Macquarrie: The hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) has brought forward an amendment which has been found acceptable by the Chair. I therefore think it is incumbent on the minister, rather than threatening the Social Credit party and denouncing them for being delayers—if I may be alliterative—to reflect for a moment and consider that if this motion goes through it would surely be an indication that the House of Commons does not view favourably, at this stage, the measure which is brought forward. It seems to me that the minister is not in the position where he can denigrate the members of the party that brought forward this motion, but I am not so sure that he is on strong ground in saying the committee cannot do anything. If the committee gets the sense of its parent body, this House, then indeed it strikes me that it is a very much different consideration that the minister should be putting forward. This is another situation altogether.

• (1650)

The fact that we have an amendment before us which is in order should have evoked a little more moderation and humility from the minister. We are in a minority parliament situation. I do not think it is incumbent upon any minister to say that this measure, having passed one or two hurdles, must now go through—or else! This is the body over which the minister and his colleagues preside. It is the competence of this body which must be their sustenance as the executive. We are in an entirely new situation.

The minister is misreading what this matter is all about. This is not the time for vituperation. It is a time for reasonableness. It is up to all of us to see how we can best serve this sector of Canadian society. This is the kind of sweet reasonableness that I would endeavour, even at this eleventh hour, to breathe into—I hope—the receptive ear of the minister.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister a question. The minister has already spoken, but I hope the House will give unanimous consent to allow him to respond to my question if he wishes to do so. I have been prompted to ask it by the very eloquent speech of my colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). If, in its wisdom, this House sees fit to pass the motion which contains the amendment now before the House, which would in fact give a mandate or directive to the government to review its position on the contents of this bill, would the minister take that as a directive and in fact review the bill and its contents, or would he ignore the wishes of this House?

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I think I said in my speech that the government had put forward a proposal, that this proposal was the government's policy and that there was a recommendation of the Governor General on this particular proposal. I also said that another return of this bill to the committee could not achieve anything, as far as I could see, in terms of changing the substance of the bill as it stands.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my position and the position of my party is that the basic amount of the old age security pension should now be \$150 a month and that the pension should be payable at age 60. We are disappointed that the bill now before us does not achieve these two goals. It is our determination to continue to press for these goals until we win them. We believe that we shall do so.

My correspondence includes letters from a good many people who express the hope that we will continue to fight for \$150 a month pension at age 60. To those who support us in that endeavour, we give our assurance that this battle will continue. But another message has been coming in today, for during the very few minutes that I was able to spend in my office this morning I received three telephone calls, one from Ottawa and two from Winnipeg. They expressed great concern about the news reports carried over CBC radio this morning. Hon. members probably heard those reports. They were to the effect that although the war veterans allowance bill was passed yesterday, the bill to increase the old age pension was blocked at 11.20 last night. I was able to explain to those people who telephoned me what had happened. I told them not to worry, the bill would soon be passed.

The fact that I received three such telephone calls in the short while I was in my office this morning indicates the concern in this country over the possibility of this bill being blocked or delayed. Much as we are determined to get further legislation later this session, or as soon as we can, increasing the pension to what it ought to be, we do not intend to be a party to any sterile or futile move the only effect of which could be to delay this bill.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I commend my friends of the Social Credit party for the vigour with which they press their point of view. I even confess that I envy a bit their freedom to be as irresponsible as they are today. However, the fact of the matter is that the amendment now before the House does not make any reference to lowering the pensionable age or any reference to increasing the amount of the pension. In their speeches, some members across the way said that is what would be voted on when this motion is put to a vote, but that is not the case. The amendment simply asks that the bill be not now read a third time but that it be referred back to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs so that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) can appear before that committee and so we can discuss the bill still further.

If this amendment carries and the bill is referred back, that committee will not have the authority to do anything, during the second round, that it was not able to do during