

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Prince George-Peace River rises on a point of order.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, the minister finally got up and answered the question, but I feel that he was unduly protected by Your Honour—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will appreciate that these remarks are entirely uncalled for. I will now call orders of the day. The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby rises on a point of order.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we could get the unanimous consent of the House to revert to motions for a brief statement to be made by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce to explain the \$47 million discrepancy in trade figures announced by his department today?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has heard the answer. He has heard a no from one side or other of the House. Orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

AMENDMENTS TO INCREASE BASIC PENSION AND TO CLARIFY BASE YEAR IN ESCALATION FORMULA

The House resumed, from Thursday, March 1, consideration of the motion of Mr. Lalonde that Bill C-147, to amend the Old Age Security Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

Mr. B. Keith Penner (Thunder Bay): Mr. Speaker, when the debate on this bill to increase the old age security pension adjourned last evening, I was making the point that for the vast majority of Canadians, but certainly not for all, these are extremely good days in which to be living in Canada. Because not all are sharing as they should in this general prosperity, it is imperative for us to bring in this legislation, Bill C-147, raising the old age pension to a minimum of \$100.

In 1952, the basic universal old age pension was first introduced in Canada by the 21st parliament. It was to be \$40 and for those who were 70 years of age and over. I suggested last evening, Mr. Speaker, that if in 1952 a cost of living escalator had been built into the plan, the pension today would amount to \$64.62—that is assuming that along the way there were no other lump sum increases, but only percentage increases according to the cost of living.

Old Age Security Act

Today, rather than a \$64 or \$65 pension, what we have is a basic old age security pension of \$100, with a supplement which could bring that amount up to \$170 for a single pensioner or \$325 for a married couple. As well, in both the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, there is now a built in cost of living escalator. The eligible age has been reduced from 70 to 65 and, in addition to this, there is the Canada Pension Plan for those who have retired fairly recently and those who will retire later. In introducing Bill C-147, the government has opted to follow the principle of universality rather than that of selectivity. The bill is universal in scope, in that the basic old age security pension has been increased to \$100 per month. Everyone 65 years old and over will benefit.

• (1220)

At the same time, however, I hope that we have not entirely abandoned the principle of helping those who are in greatest need. The hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) reminded the House last evening that the government of British Columbia has decided to add another \$30 to certain pensions, in order to help pensioners who are in special need. The federal government, under the cost-sharing formula, is paying part of that cost. The government of British Columbia has made sure that needy pensioners in that province will be paid at least \$200. It astonishes me that Ontario, the richest province in the land, cannot see its way clear to act in the same way. A few days ago, 2,000 pensioners put such a request before the government of Ontario at Queen's Park. They did not see the premier; instead, they were given a nice little talk by the social services minister of Ontario who told them how good and kind the Ontario government had been in the past to the elderly in the province.

I sincerely hope that when the Ontario Legislature goes back to work—it meets so rarely these days—immediate consideration will be given to following the priorities laid down in this House, those to do with decreasing taxes and increasing pensions. I would encourage the needy pensioners of Ontario to keep up their campaign, and continue reminding Premier Davis that his government has some responsibility for helping those who are less fortunate in his very, very wealthy province. Let Ontario add to the pensions of its needy elderly citizens, because the federal government will share in the cost of that increase by virtue of the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan.

I have already mentioned the year 1952, when the universal old age pension was first introduced in Canada. Reading the Speech from the Throne with which the fifth session of the twenty-first parliament was opened in 1952, the governor general of the day said in part:

The primary reason for summoning you . . . is to invite your consideration of a measure to provide increased security for our older citizens . . .

That session was convened so that members could enact that important piece of legislation. Notwithstanding any other legislation that this House may enact during the first session of the twenty-ninth parliament, the law we are now considering to increase basic old age pensions will forever stand to the credit of this parliament.

In 1952 when the universal old age pension was first introduced there were 700,000 persons 70 years of age and over who became eligible. Hon. D. C. Abbott, then minis-