

Old Age Security Act Amendment

distributing the additional \$30 per month will eat heavily into the taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Simpson: Mr. Chairman, during the discussion of clause 1 of this bill I hope the minister will be agreeable to dealing with the question I brought to his attention when he was speaking earlier in the debate on second reading. My question referred to the supplementary payments made by provincial authorities to people now receiving the old age security pension. We have heard two very long speeches by the minister in the house. He has appeared on the national television service to explain the rudiments of the plan to the people of Canada.

• (8:10 p.m.)

However, there are one or two things which I think the minister should be able to explain while we are on clause 1 of the bill. He appears to have unlimited statistics in front of him which seem to be more available to him than to us. First of all I ask the minister whether he agrees with the figure which has been mentioned on several occasions, namely, that there are some half a million recipients of old age security in Canada who at the present time have no other income than the \$75 payment. I do not recall whether the minister himself mentioned this figure. I should like to have some indication from him whether this figure is accepted by the officials of his department.

We have heard the minister praising this legislation as opposed to an over-all across-the-board increase in old age security payments. In doing so the minister has continually stressed the fact that under this legislation more needy people will benefit than would be the case with an overall increase. I wonder whether the minister can actually say that he really believes this is the case, because I do not think anyone has as yet brought out how many of the half a million people receive some form of supplementary payment from the provinces. I realize that a great many of them do not receive any supplementary payment but I believe that some do. Unless the minister can show otherwise, I believe he is misrepresenting the facts. He may be right in saying that these people will qualify for the extra \$30 a month, but will they actually be any better off? Can the minister assure the house that these people will be better off when this legislation is passed? We have no such assurance despite the fact that the minister has said that supplementary payments by the provinces will not be considered in computing the income of old age pensioners.

[Mr. Kindt.]

He also said that ownership of a house, money in the bank or gifts from relatives will not be taken into account in arriving at the income of recipients of old age pensions. He has not dwelt at all on the question of whether supplementary payments by the provinces will be continued. I know it might be very difficult for the minister to give us this assurance unless he has already been in touch with the provinces on this matter. He may say that he cannot speak for the provinces, but I feel that before we pass clause 1 of the bill the minister should give us the benefit of any information he may have on this matter at the present time.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Chairman, in his remarks a little while ago the minister was on the defensive in trying to explain away quite a number of facts. It will take him the rest of his political life as Minister of National Health and Welfare to explain away what he is doing under the present bill. His pretence that the forward step which was taken in 1951 should not be binding like the laws of the Medes and Persians, as he put it, but that the new idea which he has proposed should be adopted as a sign of progress will not convince anyone in this country. To pluck out of the air what was the mode and fashion in the 1920's and 1930's and then tell us in 1966 that this is a new and a fresh approach which should replace the advance made in 1951 is arrant nonsense. As we have said, it is a retrograde step and I am surprised that the minister pretends that it is a change for the better.

I would like the minister to give us a little more information with regard to the cost of the administration of this program. He has given us an estimated figure of \$3.6 million, which of course will be doubled by the time this plan is put into operation. Account must be taken of the fact that several hundred new people will have to be employed at an average salary of \$5,000 a year to carry out some of the work connected with the plan. According to Parkins's law the minister's estimate will certainly rise.

Then he told us about the amount of money which will come back to the treasury from the taxes of old age pensioners who happen to be in receipt of more than the stipulated minimum income. The minister has attempted to create the impression that money paid out for old age pensions is an added weight on the economy of this country. I wish he would give us the figures showing how much of the money that goes into old age pensions comes