

Old Age Security Act

places and tell the single people between the ages of 60 and 65 that they cannot have those benefits. I invite them to rise and say that the Minister is right, that we should buy coloured uniforms instead of giving money to the needy. If that is how he feels, he should tell the House and his constituents. They would be pleased to read that in *Hansard*, and they would treat it accordingly at the next election.

● (1110)

Obviously, the priorities of the Government are completely backwards. I would like briefly to describe a situation today which I described in the House last Friday. The situation involves a widow or a widower who is 60 or 61 years of age. In most cases it is the widows who are in financial need. However, the people who are in need, whether they be widows, widowers or single people, require benefits. In some cases widows receive survivor benefits from the Canada Pension Plan. However, divorced or single women do not have that benefit. So we can see that in certain cases the provisions in this legislation could be construed as being completely backwards.

It is obvious that a large segment of the population has been forgotten. I think that all legislators, before the end of this debate, will agree that the legislation must be modified. In addition, the Canadian population should seize the opportunity, when the House recesses next week, to tell their Members of Parliament that this law needs to be amended in order to ensure that no one is left out.

Another issue with which I have some difficulty is the way in which eligible individuals are determined. We could say that it is easy to determine, because we all know the definition of a widow. However, I do not believe it is easy and I would like to cite a few examples of how this issue could be complicated. If a woman's husband is deceased, of course she is a widow. But what happens if a widow remarries? Of course, if a widow remarries we could say that she is no longer a widow.

Mr. Grisé: What do you expect?

Mr. Boudria: I invite my hon. colleague on the other side of the House, who seems to be so smart on these issues, to answer the following question. What happens to the widow who remarries and subsequently divorces? Is she or is she not eligible for this pension? I would say that no one in the House has the answer to that question. According to the information which I have received, a person who remarries and subsequently divorces returns to the marital status which they had prior to the last marriage. That person would again have the widow's status which she had before. If that is the case, would she be eligible for this pension?

One thing is obvious. The Government House Leader, who is nodding, like myself recognizes that this legislation is impossible to administer in its present form. Being the objective, non-partisan person that he is, he will recognize that the only way to make the legislation work is to have it apply to all people between the ages of 60 and 65 who are in need.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Let's get it into committee.

Mr. Boudria: Now that the Government House Leader has understood this, I am sure he will run off to tell his Cabinet colleagues that the law should not be passed in its present form. It needs to be amended to ensure that all Canadians in need will qualify and that there will not be discrimination based on marital status.

● (1115)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments on the Hon. Member's speech?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member spent a great deal of time discussing the cost of these new uniforms. Has he any idea how much it has been estimated it would cost to restore the old uniforms? I understand that cost is equal to the cost of replacing the present uniforms.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I will give that matter all the attention it deserves. As far as I am concerned, the military are presently wearing uniforms and they can keep on wearing the ones they have. I put a question on the Order Paper months ago asking this Government what the value is of the stock of old uniforms we have on hand. The Government refuses to answer that question because it will embarrass the daylighters out of it if we find out that we probably have millions of dollars worth of the old uniform stock which we can't get rid of right now. That is an embarrassing situation for this Government, Mr. Speaker. The last thing we need is a Government which intends, as its priority, to spend money on military uniforms of different colours—as colourful as they may be—for no apparent reason at all other than to satisfy some preconceived idea that the military had a long time ago about how cute they once looked when they had different coloured uniforms. Instead, I believe the Government should put that money towards meaningful social programs. I don't apologize for thinking we should put our money where it is needed, towards the seniors of this country, instead of into that kind of a scheme.

Mr. Dick: Then why didn't the Liberals do it in 20 years?

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I have heard that some people in the military ranks, upon looking at the military expenditures, feel that the money could be better spent on refurbishing some of their equipment which is inadequate. In other words, there are more urgent and more useful ways of using these dollars, even if the dollars are to be used in the military sector. I am wondering if the Hon. Member has heard these same kinds of comments from the military people?

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, that is a very excellent question indeed put by the Hon. Member. I have had numerous conversations with constituents who are in the Armed Forces and I have yet to meet one who has told me that this investment—and I use the term generously—in new uniforms is worth while. All of the military people I have met were unanimous in saying that this is the last thing they need. They are of the view that putting the money into social programs, or even into other investments within the Armed Forces, would be prefer-