

Old Age Security Act

motion, because I agree with my friend the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise).

• (4:50 p.m.)

[English]

I agree even more strongly in English. The motion is really a very simple one. If I heard him correctly, I think the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) did not quite get the point. The motion does not have to do only with the pension being continued after the death of a pensioner to that pensioner's widow, but more specifically it requests that when man and wife are both alive and one of them is of pensionable age and the other is not, the younger of the two should also draw the pension. I think this is a very commendable proposal and I think it should be supported. And since the motion is only a request that the government should consider the matter, I do not see why we cannot allow it to come to a vote this afternoon.

An hon. Member: Then Margaret would get the pension at 36.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting bit of byplay about the Prime Minister's young bride, but the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise) made it quite clear that his motion does not set out the details. It is a request that the government consider bringing in a measure, and if the government brought in that measure the details would have to be set out in that legislation.

I agree with the sponsor of the motion that it would be appropriate, when putting in the details, to set some age at which this would come into effect. I think he suggested age 60 or perhaps 55, and I think we would all agree that such an age would be a reasonable one at which it would be understood that the spouse of a pensioner would also get the pension.

I am sorry that the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Isabelle) is not in the chamber, because that limits me somewhat in commenting on his speech today. I am always interested in speeches that he makes on pension matters. Today he did not quite give us all the history of pensions that he usually does, but really he travelled all over the world to find ways in which these people could have their needs met without the implementation of this motion. But the hon. member forgot a few things. He forgot about unemployment insurance. Maybe these young wives could qualify for unemployment insurance. Why didn't he try that one? He forgot about workmen's compensation, but maybe he will include that in his next pension speech. And he forgot about the special position of the wives and widows of Members of Parliament.

Why all this beating about the bush? Why not admit that this is a sensible, simple proposition that the hon. member has placed before the House and agree to it, namely, that if one member of a married couple is 65 and gets the pension, then the other member, whether at age 63, 58, or down as far as 55 ought to get the pension as well? I urge that this be done. I commend the hon. member for bringing the motion before the House, not

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

only for that reason but for one or two other reasons as well.

For one such other reason, I think it is a good idea to raise the pension question at every opportunity we can. I say that because when the government brought in a white paper last November and got a pension bill through the House in about 17 days, that was a strange form of participatory democracy. People are only now discovering what was in the white paper and how much of it was wrong. So we have to keep raising the pension question at every opportunity. This motion also provides an opportunity to make one or two other suggestions, but in view of the way the clock is moving I shall restrict myself to just one. I think that just as we have a provision like this in some other pieces of legislation, there ought to be a provision that when one partner of a married couple dies, both of them having been on pension, the pension should continue to the survivor at the married rate for a year or at least for six months. The problem people face in such a situation in getting adjusted, whether it be a widow or a widower, is an extremely difficult one. As a matter of fact the length of time that people live on alone is not so great that we could not continue the pension right along, but at least for a period of a year and certainly for not less than six months the pension should be continued at the married rate.

Mr. Speaker, if I end abruptly I do so deliberately because I wish to leave a few minutes during which a vote may be taken on the motion. I am sorry so much time has been spent in running all around the issue instead of facing up to the simple question involved. I support the motion.

Mr. Murray McBride (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to seize this opportunity to make a few comments on the notice of motion placed before the House by the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise). I might venture to suggest that even the erudite hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) may have slightly missed emphasizing one of the attributes of the motion, in the sense that as I read it it simply refers to spouse, which can be either a husband or a wife, and it might well be that the motion would apply to situations where an older woman had married a younger man. Therefore, I assume that the hon. member for Abitibi would want, in circumstances when the elder of the two reached pensionable age, which at the moment is 65, that both would receive the pension.

I think it is important to raise a few questions and put them on the record at this time. I am assuming that according to the terms of the motion, when an elder partner in a marriage reached pensionable age the hon. member for Abitibi would want the younger partner to receive the benefits that accrue to the elder partner, regardless of the age of the younger partner, although he did make reference to the fact that we could set an age limit above which the younger partner must be. But it was to be regardless of the financial circumstances of the younger partner.

At face value it seems to me a good idea, as was suggested by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thomp-