

considered ahead of the Manitoba scheme. British Columbia is a rich province and its finances were carefully managed in the past 20 years. When the old master left the political scene, he left half a billion dollars for his profligate heir. As a result, this plan is not costing as much out of current income as some prophets of doom had forecast. It means a great deal to those aged 60 and 65, particularly widows. I have had letters from widows who were honestly unable to see how they could manage until they reached 65, so I am pleased that they now have somewhere to turn.

I suggest that the federal government might talk to provinces such as British Columbia who have taken the first steps toward a guaranteed annual income for those aged 60 and over. The Premier of British Columbia uses the same languages the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I see by the press that they use the same four-letter words, so they should have no difficulty in communicating.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer again to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare who spoke this afternoon. Toward the end of his remarks I could only think that he has been working around the bureaucrats too long. Some of his suggestions were loaded with the bureaucratic nonsense we become used to hearing. Perhaps he will be brought back to reality by a letter which I received from a constituent of mine on January 18 which reads:

Dear Mr. McKinnon:

We are constantly told to write our members if we have a complaint. This is why I am writing you. My beef is with the pension department.

I am a widow and work as a seamstress in . . . Ladieswear, a part-time worker I should add. At the end of 1972 when I became 78 years old, I decided that at that age I surely should not be ashamed to apply for the supplementary pension. My normal income is \$65 per month, and at that time I was receiving the \$88 from Ottawa. Accordingly, I went to the local department and got a form to fill out. I was told that I had to resign outright from my place of employment—

Talk about disincentive! She had to resign from her place of employment.

—before making my application. I did this on December 18 of that year, then in the beginning of January I mailed my application to Ottawa. It was accepted, and at the end of April I got \$35 per month in addition to the \$100, which had been increased during the sitting. I had hoped the B.C. government would add a bit to that, but not a dollar did I get. Now, all this four months I could not earn a dollar, and had the above to live on. I agree that two pensioners sharing can do nicely on the slightly over \$400 per month, but one person paying \$95 rent can't possibly live on \$200.

I had decided to go off this small supplement and go back to work in the fall when I was sure to be needed again, but by mid-June Miss F. phoned me to see if I would come in and work for a few days while one woman was off sick. I agreed but knew that I would have to report it.

Hon. gentlemen opposite think this is funny, but it is not funny to me.

However, when this woman came back, holiday time was here and there were others wanting off so I was asked if I would stay on another week and another, till I was there about six weeks altogether. The first of August I wrote to the department in Ottawa, which is where I thought I should write, telling them as plainly and as honestly as I have told you why I went back to work and asked them to take me off the supplementary pension. At the end of August I went east on a holiday with relatives— they paying my expenses, I might add. When I returned early in October I found a small note from Mr. M. in the pension department here, saying he had unsuccessfully tried to get me by phone, would I please contact him soon.

Guaranteed Income

I phoned and found that he would be in that day, so I went down, not dreaming that I was going to be up on the carpet; in fact, I didn't tie this in at all with my letter to Ottawa. Mr. M. didn't see me, he sent his man Friday to do the unpleasant chore. They had sentence passed upon me before I arrived. Friday stressed the enormity of my crime, and said the pension department would have to have its pound of flesh, in my case \$175, being five months of the supplement of \$35 per month that I had received.

This lady had only worked for six weeks, yet they wanted to get back five months of the supplement.

I was stunned with this turn of events, in view of my being so honest in reporting what I had earned. This amount is more than half of what I earned. I asked him, why he didn't send me to jail? No answer. Friday kept saying that I had opted out; he flipped it around. I told him that I had not opted out; I was told to get out.

Remember, she had been told to resign so that she could get this supplement.

I expect when Ottawa received my letter, they immediately thought it belonged to the Victoria branch, so sent it to Mr. M., their FBI for B.C. There was nothing more I could say after being told that they would have no choice but to deduct \$20 per month off my security pension until the entire \$175 was paid. I walked out.

I believe that the federal government have done very well in their increase in the security pension, but their ruling on supplementary one is away out. I could live in a \$30,000 home that I owned and get the minicome, but I can't pay \$95 rent and get it. Now, does that make sense? And with the spiralling prices of today I can't possibly live on the \$205 or whatever it is. I have to go back to work, and I am grateful that the place is there for me and it is not because they are sorry for me but because I am a good worker. I would rather work than accept any form of financial assistance and fortunately I am permitted to choose what hours I want to work.

I am grateful for this and my government should be grateful that there is a woman like me. I was treated like a common criminal at the department here. They found their man with \$175 of federal money. And at Ottawa they throw money around like drunken sailors every day! I could weep over Canadian politics!

I only ask that the sentence that they have passed upon me be annulled and my money returned to me. I am not asking for a pension, I would rather work. I do not smoke nor drink and I do not even permit myself the luxury of cablevision. I know no further ways of cutting down yet the price of everything that I need to buy goes up.

I would be grateful for any pressure you could cause to be put on those who make these awful rules. I thank you.

Yours truly,

Minnie . . .

On January 31 I wrote to the minister. I received an acknowledgement of my letter but have not yet received a reply. I realize the minister is very busy and has to worry about millionaire football owners and who is going to control the American players who play in Canada. But this little lady of 78 years has expressed very well what is wrong with the department. I do not think anything I could add would put it any better than Minnie did.

● (2130)

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I should like to say how I appreciate having the opportunity to participate in this debate and the chance which the Social Credit Party of Canada has given us to discuss in the House the important question of a guaranteed annual income.

I have appreciated the comments made by members today during the debate. I believe that we have indeed witnessed a debate of a very high quality which will