

Old Age Security Act Amendment

most important means to strengthen our national unity because, through this measure, the federal government is showing its concern to meet the needs of the whole country.

[*English*]

This measure, which is under federal jurisdiction and is handled directly by the federal government, is available to people in every part of Canada. It will be therefore an important part of this government's program to strengthen our national unity. I urge this house to support this legislation so that the additional payments which are needed by so many of our older people will go out to them as soon as possible in the new year.

Mr. H. A. Moore (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, at the risk of repeating some of the very logical arguments already advanced in this debate, I should like to make a few comments. I cannot help but disagree with the previous speaker on one point in particular, and that is his comparison of the previous application form for old age security which must be filled out before payments are received with the present one. The present form contains the criterion of age only, not of income. However, Mr. Speaker, I intend to support this bill as it will increase the pension received by many of the needy among our elderly people, and the sooner this is done the better.

I fail to see, Mr. Speaker, how a principle that has long been accepted can be applied to part of this \$105 pension and not to the other part. Surely if the pension of \$75 a month needs to be increased—and it does—in order to keep pace with the rapidly rising cost of living, or perhaps we may call it the decrease in the purchasing power of the dollar, then the same principle should apply to the proposed increase of \$30 as well as to future increases which may be necessary to provide decent living standards for our elderly people. The figure of \$75 is certainly unrealistic at the present time.

Since old age security is paid out of a fund established from tax collection, it follows that these taxpayers should reap some benefit. Otherwise, the ambitious and hard workers are discriminated against. Do we want a society in which it pays a man to do as little as possible in his working years so that he can get more welfare from the various governments? This, it seems to me, is a socialistic philosophy.

Do we also want to prevent elderly recipients of the pension from contributing to our

economy by continuing to do what work they can? I am referring here to work which may be essential to their physical and mental well being. By earning what money they can after they have reached the age of 65, are they thereby forfeiting any increase in old age security? Under this bill, Mr. Speaker, they certainly are.

There has been considerable argument during this debate, Mr. Speaker, about whether there is a means test here. As reported at page 10894 of *Hansard* the minister stated that those who consider this a means test were dishonest or stupid. Many letters from elderly people show that they felt that a means test is being applied here. I am sure that the minister does not consider these people to be dishonest or stupid; they are quite sincere.

The application of any test to determine eligibility for the additional \$30—call it a means test, a needs test, an income test or just a test—will create many problems of administration. This type of legislation always does; and, of course, a test of this sort will be costly to administer. Surely the minister and the government will admit that if a straight increase were granted with no strings attached much of it would be recovered through income taxes in those cases where the full amount was not required to maintain a decent standard of living. A straight increase in the pension would eliminate so many problems that it should be given consideration.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with some of the things which have been said in this debate, but first of all before I deal with what is wrong with this legislation I should like to say that a number of us in this party have received letters from present recipients of old age security pensions, people who have nothing but their pensions, in some cases with a provincial supplement, to live on, begging us on no account to allow the principle of universality in the application of the present old age security pension to be done away with or undermined. One letter I received this morning from a person who would be eligible for this new federal supplement begged us on no account to weaken on this principle. He considered that it was the only fair way of dealing with people when they get to a certain age.

• (5:10 p.m.)

That is the first thing, and I want to reiterate it. This legislation undermines completely the principle of universality in our old age