

*Old Age Security*

ence in European countries indicates that they moved first with regard to the principle of universality, then to the principle of selectivity and back to the principle of universality. I think the reason is obvious. I think it will become more obvious to Canadians if this legislation is adopted. Selectivity creates a tremendous divisiveness between members of the community. Some senior citizens will be receiving \$80 a month, some will be receiving \$135 a month and some married couples receiving \$255 a month. Instead of applying the principle of universality, the principle of selectivity is being applied. Experience in different countries has shown that the divisiveness created between members of the community cannot be tolerated. These are the reasons that we say this is a bad bill.

A few years ago the Liberal government adopted the famous phrase "war on poverty". They have not yet fired a single shot. They have not yet even coped with the battle. In fact, they have copped out. They have not even attempted to get on to the battle ground in order to fight. At one time poverty was considered in the sense of absolute, total deprivation. Today, it not only means a lack of income, but a lack of opportunities for good health, education, meaningful employment and recreational facilities, the things that develop self respect, a sense of worth and integrity which should be regarded as normal in the community.

I can do no better, Mr. Speaker, than to quote from the Fifth Annual Review of the Economic Council of Canada with regard to the approach to poverty in this country:

We believe that serious poverty should be eliminated in Canada, and that this should be designated as a major national goal. We believe this for two reasons. The first is that one of the wealthiest societies in world history, if it also aspires to be a Just Society, cannot avoid setting itself such a goal. Secondly, poverty is costly.

It also said that poverty in Canada is real, that the numbers affected are not in the thousands but the millions, and that there is more of it than our society can tolerate or our economy afford.

And the council defined a poverty line, in money terms. This summer, Senator David Croll, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Poverty, took the council's figures, made the adjustment for an 8 per cent increase in the cost-of-living since, and came up with the following:

Poverty, for one person, began in 1968 at \$1,800; in 1970, this was \$1,944. Two persons, \$3,000; now \$3,240. Three, \$3,600; now \$3,888. Four, \$4,200; now \$4,536. And, he said, the point below which poverty begins rises thereafter by \$600 for each child.

If, as the government wants, we are to have a just society, surely this should be one of our national goals. Bill C-202 is not the proper approach. When we talk about poverty, we should talk about the over-all situation. We should not merely talk about income for senior citizens, but decent housing, medical and recreational services for these people. With regard to decent housing for senior citizens, we have barely scratched the surface. There is one senior citizens project in my constituency. Names must be placed on a waiting list and the waiting time varies between four and five years. Is it any wonder that I say this proposal merely scratches the surface?

[Mr. Gilbert.]

• (2:30 p.m.)

As to medical services, when these people require hospital treatment they get it, but after treatment they are often obliged to move to a convalescent home and most of our hospitalization schemes do not cover the costs of these homes. So, whatever money they have saved is quickly depleted by the cost of nursing services. Surely, when we are dealing with senior citizens we should concern ourselves not only with income at these levels but with housing and medical services, the total picture.

My hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre, in his eloquent speech on Wednesday, set forth his reasons for calling the government's proposals a "redistribution of old age poverty". Some hon. members who are in the chamber today were not present on that occasion and I think I should attempt again to impress upon the government just what he meant. As of January 1, a single person will receive \$1,620 a year and a couple will receive \$3,060. At the present time a single person receives \$111.41, and under the new provision will receive \$135.70, a net increase of \$23.59 subject to income tax. This is, if he is entitled to the full income supplement. A couple now receives \$222.82 and under the new provision they will receive \$255; the difference is \$32.28, or \$16.09 each. This is the so-called gift the government is making—a difference of \$23.59 to a pensioner who is entitled to a full guaranteed income supplement and \$16.09 to a married person and also to his wife.

All we are doing is shifting poverty around, and my friend was perfectly right in his assertion. The figures show that 60 per cent of those receiving old age pensions will be receiving some form of guaranteed income supplement and that the other 40 per cent is made up of people who are receiving only \$80. Ten per cent of these are in the wealthy class, probably like some of the members of the Liberal party who have additional incomes.

**Mr. Anderson:** Speak for yourself; you are a lawyer in Broadview.

**Mr. Otto:** A rich lawyer from Broadview.

**Mr. Gilbert:** The other 30 per cent are people whose incomes range from \$2,200 to \$4,500—\$2,200 for single persons and \$4,500 for married people. Would you say, Mr. Speaker, that these are rich persons in Canada today? I would not think so. These incomes place them almost below the poverty line. Yet, these are the men and women who would be denied the benefit of the 2 per cent escalation provision and be given an increase amounting to less than 10 cents a week. We are certainly fortunate to have among us experts on pensions, such as my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre, who can point out to us that the people who will suffer, 30 per cent, or 510,000 of the 1,700,000 drawing pensions, are people receiving total incomes of between \$2,200 and \$4,500. Is this being fair to our senior citizens?

I have a few minutes left to me, and I should like to direct my attention to the idea of a guaranteed annual