

Old Age Security Act

people like George Bernard Shaw, Albert Einstein or Albert Schweitzer, to say nothing of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, were to have ceased their labours at 60. I do not think he has ceased. I don't know when he is ever going to cease. I think he's going to go on forever.

An hon. Member: Just like Moses.

Mr. Flynn: That's right. I think he could be wound up by the hon. member for Edmonton who could keep him going just by pushing. He is like Moses, he keeps going and adds to our legislation.

An hon. Member: Where was he when the lights went out?

Mr. Flynn: It cannot be determined by any reliable method that younger workers are more productive than older ones even in highly technological enterprises. Mr. Speaker, I think the biggest and most important thing to keep in mind is this Bill C-62 and many of the bills like it in the old age category.

We must be careful and think of the people who are, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said, the spinsters, the widows, the widowers, the bachelors, those who are apparently unloved or untouched by the government. We are compassionate, and in the ruling as made by this bill to change the provision for spouses we show compassion in a big way. I hope the government goes on with its leadership for a long time and allows people to live a decent, honourable, and capable life within this community.

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): It is a pleasure to speak on this bill today, Mr. Speaker, and to do so with the understanding that the bill will receive fairly speedy second reading.

I listened to the remarks of the speakers who preceded me with interest. I must pay tribute to the honourable and venerable member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) for his unremitting efforts on behalf of the pensioners of Canada. I have yet to hear a bill introduced into this House which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has spoken to without getting on to pensions sooner or later. It is a remarkable feat of parliamentary magic. No matter what the subject is, the hon. member can introduce the topic of pensions and speak of the plight of pensioners. To my unending surprise and pleasure he was able to speak on pensions during the debate on national defence.

An hon. Member: When you have been here 80 years you will be able to do the same thing.

● (1510)

Mr. McKinnon: It is a remarkable attribute and I intend it as a compliment to him. I assure him, coming from the retirement centre of Canada as I do, that he is held in high regard among the pensioners of Canada as well as by myself. This does not prevent me from pointing out that the hon. member, in his remarks this afternoon, seemed to me to be a little unfair when he likened the position of the Conservative Party to the position of the Liberal Party.

[Mr. Flynn.]

We in the Conservative Party consider this a bit of an insult.

I bear in mind that there was a minority government situation in 1972. Having fought in that campaign, I heard a great deal about the position of the NDP on old age pensions. They campaigned on a basic pension of \$150. This substantial raise would, they insisted, be one of the first terms for their support of the Liberal Party in a minority government position, yet they caved in far too easily when there was a relatively miserly raise of \$12, bringing the pension up to \$100.

I remember sitting in the House the night when the budget came in. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre had been insisting on the \$150 figure; I thought it would be about \$130; and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) announced \$100. I turned to my seatmate and said, "That's the end of this parliament; the NDP would never support such a miserly raise". But they swallowed their protestations and principles and voted with the Liberal Party on that occasion. I am only saying this because of what the hon. member said about the Liberals and the Conservatives.

I should like to take a look for a little while at the bill which is before us. I know that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) is noted for having speechwriters, but I think he should let his speechwriters write the bills, and have the people who write the bills write his speeches, or at least try to do something different so that the two can agree.

Mr. Paproski: A \$300 speech of a \$600 speech?

Mr. McKinnon: I thought that today's was a \$700 or \$800 speech. I thought it was one of the better ones his writers had provided him with, and I hope I do not create any dissension among his speechwriters if I suggest that he should go up to \$700 or \$800 for that one. This bill appears to me to be partly written by speechwriters. As for the other part, it looks as if he has given a different page to each section of his department and said, "Write the page and pay no attention to what the other pages say; we will put it together and throw it in front of parliament".

This bill is one of the most confusing and contradictory pieces of paper ever put in front of us, and perhaps I can point to some of the contradictions.

The definition of a spouse is the first thing that creates concern and puzzlement. The first page clearly defines the meaning of "spouse". It says:

"spouse" in relation to a pensioner includes a person of the opposite sex who has lived with the pensioner for three or more years where there is a bar to their marriage or at least one year where there is no such bar and the pensioner and that person have publicly represented themselves as man and wife;

That sounds quite simple, except for the fact that one of the minister's speechwriters put out a news release the same day saying that persons applying for the guaranteed income supplement and spouse's allowance for the first time will be required to submit a certificate of marriage. There is no way on earth that you can have both of those things, and I say that a bill of parliament should take precedence over the minister's press release. So when we come to consider the meaning of "spouse" we will take it