

Old Age Security Act Amendment

means test as it has been applied in the past, a needs test as it is being applied now and an income test as envisaged by the minister. I am concerned about one or two things in respect of the passage of this bill, and I note that the hon. member for Chappleau (Mr. Laprise) in his speech indicated that these things were also of concern in the province of Quebec. What will happen in respect of supplementary payments now being made by provinces when this measure becomes law? In the past this has included Alberta, and I am sure it includes all the other provinces. If there has been an increase in the federal old age security pension, there has been a decrease in the supplementary payment by the provincial department of welfare.

● (9:10 p.m.)

Perhaps a great many senior citizens will not have any net gain at all. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I can anticipate a situation where it may involve a loss to a senior citizen to apply for the supplementary payment under the guaranteed income program. In the province of Alberta anyone who qualifies for a supplementary payment from the department of welfare automatically receives a medical card, and that medical card may be worth far more to some senior citizens than \$30 a month. However, the supplementary payment from the province and the medical card are granted on the basis of a needs test. If the means of the individual go beyond the point where the province pays a supplementary amount, of course these persons do not receive a medical card. Some senior citizens would be better advised not to apply for this supplement because they could lose more than they would gain.

I hope the minister will take this into account and at least try to work out some arrangement with the provinces so that if the federal government is paying the senior citizen a cash income upon which an income or needs test is based, those citizens who have a medical card will not have that card withdrawn simply because the federal government is now making the cash payment instead of the provincial government. I hope, too, that the provincial governments will be very charitable and understanding with respect to this increase, because I think the members of this house and Canadians generally agree that the cost of living has risen substantially. What is more, I believe we have an obligation to provide, that as the productivity of the nation goes up, so will the standard of living of our senior citizens. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, while

[Mr. Olson.]

\$90, \$100 or \$105 may have been all that was allowed in 1964 or 1965 under the provincial regulations, this amount should be raised sufficiently so there will be a substantial net increase to each senior citizen as a result of this bill becoming law. I said at the outset that I would not intervene in this debate for long. However, I have encountered this problem two or three times. In fact, it has arisen every time the old age security pension has been increased. I hope it will not be repeated.

In passing I should just like to say, because I see the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) is in the chamber, that I liked his suggestion that we take back \$100 million from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and put it to far better use by paying it into the old age security fund. The other day the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) asked the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) where he would suggest we could save \$100 million. I suggest, having seen some of the trash produced by the C.B.C. and its biased and politically slanted ideology, that the government would do this country a great service by withdrawing \$100 million from the corporation and putting it into the old age security fund.

There seems to be a contradiction in the bill. Clause 19 says:

A benefit shall not be assigned, charged, attached, anticipated or given as security, and any transaction purporting to assign, charge, attach, anticipate or give as security a benefit is void.

The very next clause says that the Department of National Health and Welfare has the authority to attach future payments if a person should receive an overpayment. Perhaps this provision has to be in the bill. Perhaps it has to be stated in the law as a means of protecting the public treasury from fraudulent applications. However, I do not believe there should be any large-scale attempts to recover payments unless they are justified and warranted.

There have been cases in the past where senior citizens have received a few dollars more, sometimes several hundred dollars spread over a long period of time, than they were entitled to receive, after examination of the account and the cheques they had received. Sometimes the amount overpaid has been recovered by the treasury through payments of \$5 or \$10 a month on the part of the pensioner. The hon. member for Prince Edward-Lennox (Mr. Alkenbrack) said a few minutes ago that our senior citizens are not dumb. I believe I am quoting him correctly. He said they will not report what they do not