

my constituency there are many elderly people who are watching events very closely at the present time to see what is likely to happen. They know what their situation is. They know very well that they cannot make ends meet on present pensions and sources of income available to them. They see things happening around them which are completely beyond their control; nevertheless, they are affected by economic and social developments which have a definite impact upon their day-to-day living, upon their pocketbooks and upon the small amount of money available to them in their remaining years.

I should like to refer briefly to some of the past history of old age pensions. While I am a relatively new member of this House, I have had some contact with events of the past. I have watched from the galleries on many occasions as subjects such as this were debated. I have heard many spokesmen for the Liberal party in past years brag about their record in connection with welfare policies and declare how constantly they kept the interests of the small people of this country in mind and how well they were looking after their welfare. Really, it was a great day for Canada, as was pointed out earlier in this debate by my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), when the Liberal government of the day decided to do away with the means test in relation to old age pensions and move to the principle of a universal pension.

A great proponent of Liberal policy of that day, Hon. Paul Martin, now government leader in the Senate, was the leading apostle of the government's philosophy in this area. He, along with other Liberal spokesmen, took advantage of every opportunity to draw attention to the great thing they had done by doing away with the means test, by abolishing the differentiation which had existed amongst the old people and making a universal pension available with all its advantages.

It seems, now, that the government is ignoring some of the statements which were made by government spokesmen years ago in defence of the move made at that time toward a universal pension. A significant step was taken a number of years ago when the Canada Pension Plan was introduced, together with the guaranteed income supplement and the universal old age security pension. These measures were, of course, the subject of protracted debate in the House. People such as my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre deserve great credit for the efforts they put forth then, as well as on many other occasions throughout the years, on behalf of the elderly people of this country in an effort to ensure them a fair deal.

• (5:50 p.m.)

It is quite clear, as already stated by some of my colleagues, that the effect of legislation such as that now before the House is to create two classes of citizens in this country—the haves and the have-nots. In this connection an injustice is being done to both groups. On the one hand, those who will have to resort to applying for the guaranteed income supplement will have to go through the humiliating procedures involved in filing

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their applications and taking what amounts to a means test in order to qualify.

I am sure all members of the House have had occasion to deal with some of the very difficult cases that arise. One is amazed at the complexities of administration and the myriad figures that are produced just in dealing with a single case. Multiplied many times over in terms of the number of people who are drawing the guaranteed income supplement, we see something of the monstrosity that has been created and which is created when we have to deal with methods of this sort and programs of this type that distinguish between one group of people and another.

On the other hand, we must also recognize that there is discrimination against those people who, under the present program or under the new program, will qualify only for the universal old age pension which is now \$79.58 a month and which, if this measure is passed by Parliament, will be increased to \$80. Their first grievance has to be with the reduction of their pension at the start of the new year. These people had every right and reason to expect that as of January 1 their pension would increase to \$81.17 from the present figure of \$79.58. But it has been decreed by certain circles across the way that this will not be the case.

I am sure the minister is aware that there are many people in this country who are just above the level of income that would otherwise qualify them for receiving the guaranteed income supplement and whose only source of supplementary income is the old age security pension. These people are being cheated out of some of the return that they had every reason and right to expect as a result of their labours in past years on behalf of the people of this country.

It seems to me that a situation such as this is contrary to trends in our pension plans. I feel we have to examine what has happened in many other areas of pensions legislation in this country. We have to consider the position of this group of people who through a little luck or by good management have accumulated a modest, small income other than that which they receive by way of pension. Possibly they have some savings on hand which earn them additional income. These people will receive \$80 under the new proposal, it is true, but they will not receive their just reward compared to what other people receive under other aspects of these programs.

It seems to me that a question of elementary justice is involved here. There should be, under our program, provision for the payment of an adequate universal pension, as suggested by other speakers, of at the very minimum \$100 a month. If the government continues to pay a guaranteed income supplement, then the total payment should be at least \$150 a month, though we would prefer and we advocate a pension of \$150 a month for all Canadians.

I suggest that if this measure is passed in its present form it will cause many Canadians to look at government and at Members of Parliament with a sceptical eye. This government, with its typical Liberal, Machiavellian approach, is perhaps saving up a further increase until