

Old Age Security Act Amendment

raised at the time of adjournment tonight are as follows: the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard), Immigration—French immigration to Canada; the hon. member for Compton-Frontenac (Mr. Latulippe), Family Allowances—request for increased payments.

Mr. Langlois (Mégantic): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, would the house agree, with unanimous consent, to adjourn for the dinner hour and to resume its sitting at seven o'clock?

Hon. John N. Turner (Member of the Administration): Mr. Speaker, I think that perhaps the house should not adjourn in order to expedite its business.

[*English*]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT AMENDMENT**PROVISION OF GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT AND DETERMINATION OF PENSIONERS' INCOMES**

The house resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen for the second reading of Bill No. C-251, to amend the Old Age Security Act.

Mr. Ed. Schreyer (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I have only a few remarks to make as a follow-up to the eloquent pleas made earlier in this debate by the hon. members for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill), Simcoe East (Mr. Rynard) and others. One reason I enjoyed listening so much to the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, who spoke earlier this afternoon, was that he tried to reconstruct the basis of past parliamentary discussions relative to old age security and the question of means testing.

I think it is well that the younger members in this chamber—and I think particularly of the younger members opposite—acquaint themselves with that period of time 14 or 15 years ago when the subject matter of old age security and means testing was being debated at length in parliament. It seems to me that at that time members came to the conclusion a system of old age pensions that was based on means testing was simply not satisfactory for the older people of this country. As a result of the measure that is now before us, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing at least a partial return to that kind of situation.

I realize, of course, that to be fair one ought to differentiate between various kinds of testing for the purpose of social allowance or for

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

the purpose of paying pensions. That is certainly so, Mr. Speaker. But surely, a lot of the acrimony that welled up to the surface in this debate could have been avoided had members agreed to some kind of definition of terms. In my estimation, the kind of test that is involved in this measure before us is not to be construed as a means test in the sense the term was used years ago. It is not a means test in that sense; but it is nevertheless a testing of means so far as current income is concerned. All these digressions and all this bitterness could have been avoided if that had been conceded by members on both sides of the house.

● (6:10 p.m.)

I think the minister could have helped matters had he been prepared to present statistical data and charts showing estimates of the number of old age pensioners expected to receive the additional income under this proposal, the number receiving the pension if the old age security pension had simply been increased on a universal basis, and the differences in administration costs between a pension paid on a means test basis and one not so paid. I submit that the increase in administration cost will be a direct consequence of additional administrative chores in the testing which is part and parcel of the measure before us.

I agree, and I say this with all the emphasis I can muster, that it is unfortunate that we are increasing the administrative machinery and costs to take care of a problem that is not major, the additional old age security payment which might be made to those having more than a basic current income. The minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) argues that by increasing old age security universally it will be paid to the people in the category of senators, members of parliament, and others. This argument will not be given credence in the country, particularly by those people in pensionable age groups.

If the government is so concerned about senators, why did it raise senators salaries to \$15,000? Why did it not leave their salaries at \$14,640, because the extra \$360 pension then would have brought their income to the present \$15,000 level. This sort of argument is spurious. The government made a case by saying that a number of people getting this pension will not need it. Is that a good enough reason to embark on a course resulting in highly increased administrative expenditures? I do not wish to dwell at length on this point