

Old Age Security Act (No. 2)

● (1230)

[English]

The Parliamentary Secretary again rises to seek unanimous consent to put a further question to the Hon. Member who has just spoken. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Maltais: Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the Hon. Member that the present Government has already implemented the programs he just mentioned in those three countries. For instance, the Government has offered \$3,000 to prospective homeowners; it granted tax cuts, such as the child tax credit, and offered a whole series of incentives to promote investments in Canada. Better still, through FIRA, it is trying to strengthen industry with a greater Canadian ownership.

However, I should like to ask the Hon. Member whether those countries have not precisely cut public spending and practically eliminated indexation, while the Canadian Government is still indexing at least at the 6 and 5 per cent level not only the benefits of senior citizens, but also the allowances for those families that need it most.

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is correct in saying that the Government has just changed its policy, but the problem is not as simple as that, because for ten or fourteen years, the present Government has been fighting private enterprise, foreign investment, the oil industry and our own manufacturing industry. The flight of capital from this country has been enormous. It is common knowledge that last year, \$1 billion left the country. There is \$8 billion which cannot be found in the national accounts. So we have had a tremendous flight of capital from our country, and now it is a matter of confidence, of encouraging people, for instance, to build plants in Canada. The petrochemical industry in Alberta is a good example. Do you know that a company near Medicine Hat is now having a petrochemical plant built, not in Canada but in New Zealand? Why? Because the tax levied on the petrochemical industry is \$1.05 per 1,000 cubic feet.

As the Hon. Member from Alberta said earlier, we cannot sell the product on the international market because it is too expensive. I think in Alberta, construction of nine or perhaps eleven plants was either cancelled or delayed because of this tax. One plant can provide, I think it was 800 or 900 jobs for two years, during the construction period.

We should have a Government that . . . The Hon. Member mentioned that since the 1980 election, FIRA has been telling foreign investors: Do not bother to come, we do not need you. It is quite true that three months ago, the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) changed his mind. Now, you may come.

But let me give you another example in connection with FIRA.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. I am sorry to have to interrupt the Hon. Member, but although he did agree to answer a question by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Maltais), he should confine himself to the subject now before the House. I am afraid that we are now discussing an entirely different matter.

Mr. Kilgour: As far as the other subjects are concerned, if I may not go on with my examples—although they are quite good ones—of the problems created by FIRA in this country, I would say that none of these three countries has similar measures because to my knowledge, these countries are incapable of introducing a measure that is unfair, harsh and ridiculous in the extreme as far as the economy is concerned. For instance, when, thanks to the Government, senior citizens see their purchasing power go down, unemployment and economic problems for our country are the result. Kenneth Galbraith, in fact, any economist will tell us that a drop in purchasing power creates major problems for the economy.

[English]

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of speaking on this Bill earlier in the debate. Now that closure has been imposed on the debate on Bill C-131, I would like to add a few remarks in the brief ten minutes that I have.

First, I wish to condemn the Government in the most emphatic terms for its obvious attack on old age pensioners. The Government's appeal that old age pensioners must join all Canadians in contributing and sacrificing to help the Government reduce inflation borders on immorality. It is an appeal for sacrifice to today's senior citizens, our grandparents and parents, who more than anyone are used to sacrifice. They have sacrificed all their lives to raise their children. They made a sacrifice when they came to this country and went without year after year so their children and grandchildren could get the best education and enjoy a better standard of living. They knew what sacrifice was.

One has only to visit senior citizen homes such as the New Horizons Drop-In Centres across the country to learn of these sacrifices. Talk to the pioneers who broke the land with nothing more than an axe so that they could build and pass on something to their children: they know what sacrifice is; the Government does not have to tell them.

I say it is immoral for the Government to zero in on the senior citizens and for the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) to say that senior citizens know their responsibility to the Government. That Government is spending \$40 million on television and radio advertising year after year. In the year when the Government is asking senior citizens to relinquish \$260 of their pension which they received because of their sacrifices, the estimated total advertising