

S.O. 21

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 21

[English]

PENSIONS

OLD AGE PENSION QUALIFYING AGE

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has continuously been championing the importance of universal social programs against the misguided, half-hidden agenda of the Conservative Government. Of special significance has been the plight of pensioners. I think it appropriate, therefore, not only to echo the concerns of those on this side of the House to protect that which we pioneered, but to urge the Government to enhance the old age pension system by lowering the qualifying age from 65 to 60.

In my own riding I have witnessed people who are 60 years of age and over, particularly those engaged in heavy construction work, who continue their work in pain and agony. They do so because they must put food on the table. However, these individuals would gladly take a well deserved rest at age 60 and enjoy their remaining years with some comfort and integrity. This would also open up opportunities for many of our young people.

It was a Liberal Government which lowered the pension age from 70 to 65. It is the Liberal Party which today is leading the fight to preserve an equitable pension system. It is my recommendation to establish the qualifying age at 60 so that we may make pensions even more progressive and fair for all Canadians.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE

RECORD OF PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS

Mr. Reg Stackhouse (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, the commitment of the Conservative Government to social insurance was expressed in this year's Throne Speech which introduced improved pensions for widows and veterans. This was no innovation. For over a quarter of a century, Progressive Conservative Governments in Canada have shown the same concern for universal social justice for all Canadians regardless of age, sex, race, religion or region.

One reason for the Liberal defeat in 1957 was the niggardly treatment of old age pensioners by the St. Laurent Government. Soon after taking office the Diefenbaker Government fulfilled its pledge to make a substantial increase in the old age pension, an act which helped gain that administration a victory in 1958. That Diefenbaker Government introduced the first federal hospital insurance to Canada and thus began the publicly-funded medicare programs across the country which are now administered by seven provincial Progressive Conservative Governments.

It was a PC Government that introduced the Canadian Bill of Rights which assured social justice and civil rights for all Canadians.

The technological and vocational education Act provided educational opportunities for all Canadians regardless of their region, including those in regions which were not adequately funded.

For over a quarter of a century, Progressive Conservative Governments and their policies have sought to give social justice to all Canadians regardless of age, sex, race, religion or region.

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CRIMINAL CODE

WARRANT ISSUED FOR ARREST OF DR. MORGENTALER

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Metropolitan Toronto Police issued a warrant for the arrest of Dr. Henry Morgentaler on a charge of conspiring to procure an abortion. I am rising to express my concern, and the concern of many people in my Party and across Canada, that yet another charge is being laid against Dr. Morgentaler despite the fact that four juries have acquitted him on abortion charges laid over the past decade, and that doctors who provide abortions in the Province of Quebec under the same federal law have not faced criminal charges since 1976.

My Party calls on the Government to repeal Section 251 of the Criminal Code so that women can have access to a full range of reproductive health services, including access to medical abortions in free conscience.

Four juries have sent a clear message to Parliament that they will not convict under the current law. They are saying that the law is unenforceable, and a law that cannot be enforced makes a mockery of the law generally and should be changed. In the majority of countries with a common law system, the Crown is not permitted to appear a jury acquittal. In announcing his decision to appeal, the Attorney General of Ontario said that to proceed with another prosecution without the law being clarified would clearly not be in the public interest.

I therefore call on the federal Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) to expedite the process of clarifying the law. All of the proceedings in the Morgentaler case in Toronto should immediately be put before the Supreme Court of Canada on a direct constitutional reference, in order to get the opinion of the highest court of the land on this important social issue. It is a question of justice and fairness.

Mr. Speaker: I would advise the Hon. Member that his time has expired.

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PARLIAMENT

EXPECTATIONS OF CANADIANS

Mr. Bill Attewell (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, Canadians realize that we must all get down to the job of solving the