

Old Age Security Act

Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) is simply supposed to comment on the speech made by the Member taking part in the debate.

An Hon. Member: Right on!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): If I may explain briefly the point we have reached in this debate, the Hon. Member for Richelieu (Mr. Plamondon) commented the speech made by the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia), and the Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) was then recognized because the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) had not deemed it necessary to reply.

We are therefore still on questions and comments and the Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) has the floor.

Mr. Malépart: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, I see that the Hon. Member is always beside the track. Could you give him a lesson once and for all? This is all I have to say on this point of order.

To go on with the question I was asking my colleague, following the comments made by the Hon. Member for Richelieu (Mr. Plamondon), when I was suggesting he was not at all conversant with the issue, he should read it . . . I would like to know. This is the same question I was asking. The other comment is that he decided not to beat about the bush. But since a Progressive Conservative is unable to follow something up to the end, will my hon. colleague tell me, since they stopped only halfway, what the difference is between a widow in need, whatever her age, her income, or her housing cost, and another person who is separated and has the same age, income and housing cost? What is the difference? How can we determine that one is more in need than the other?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia).

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, clearly the question asked by the Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) gives us another chance to repeat that there is unfairness in this legislation. And I am truly amazed that the Hon. Member for Richelieu (Mr. Plamondon) would have preferred to introduce another dimension into the debate, which has nothing to do with the issue now before the House. Indeed the subject of the discussion is quite clear. It is whether we should provide help, give pensions to all those who need them, between the aged 60 and 65, that group certainly being a part of that population. And, naturally, as this has already been mentioned, we agree to that protection for those in need in that age group.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The period for questions and comments is now over.

[English]

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, this Bill has been long awaited, small as it is. I congratulate the Minister on bringing it forward. Some thousands of low income widowed

people who may benefit certainly need it, and if it were possible to speed it up, I am sure Members on this side of the House would be willing to do so. However, the Government, for whatever reason, has said that it will not come into effect until September of this year. Unless it accepts in committee some amendment to that starting date, then no matter what we do today or any other day, it will not bring the pensions any closer. I assume that it will receive examination on that point in committee and I hope that this is one of the points on which amendments might be considered favourably by the Minister and his Government.

We have had some comment as to why the Bill deals with such a small number of pensioners who are in need. The requests of the pension reform committee go far beyond this. The minority report of the dissenting member, Mr. Miller, goes still further beyond this. Mr. Miller pointed out that there are single people between the ages of 60 and 65 who should have this benefit but, according to this legislation, they still will not.

● (1510)

It was suggested by one of the government speakers that the country does not have sufficient money to pay pensions to more than this small number of people. Eighty-five thousand would be a big number in relation to the population of an apartment building, but in relation to the elderly population of Canada it is a small number. It has been suggested by government Members that there is not enough money to extend this benefit to people who may be equally in need and equally deserving but do not happen to have ever been married. One speaker suggested that the Government may have saved some money. In that case, whether they are widowed or not widowed, the legislation is not intended for them. That is not the point I am making. I am talking about people who are equally poor and equally needy but happen to have never been married. That situation is occurring more often in the country. There are more people now who are single, for whatever reason. Marriage is not as common as it used to be 10 or 15 years ago in Canada.

I think this omission is an unnecessary oversight. The excuse used by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) that the Government does not have the money would be laughable if it were not so sad. It is the same silly excuse that was used by the previous Government which he attacked so bitterly.

The Deputy Minister said that the Government has a big debt. He told us to look at the report of the Auditor General. In his report the Auditor General tells us where the greatest part of that debt arises. He tells us that if certain groups paid what the basic principle of income tax would require them to pay, there would be no debt at all. The Auditor General spoke about the \$30 billion to \$50 billion per year paid to large corporations in the form of taxes not collected. This was arranged under the previous Government when the present Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) was Minister of Finance. The bonanzas to the big corporations have devel-