

Old Age Security Act

Our Liberal government, of course.

—to have that kind of an election, because I think the people of Quebec want to be reassured that there is at least one strong government somewhere. And if we are campaigning in Quebec and saying: "Look, you may be having troubles locally but don't worry; the country is in good strong hands; please vote for us", I think it wouldn't be disadvantageous to us.

I am sure Premier Bourassa is saying to himself "With friends like these, who needs enemies".

The province of Quebec made its position clear with respect to this bill. I do not necessarily share their views, but there has been abrasiveness and divisiveness between the two governments. In these circumstances, the leader of this government which is trying to push through this bill, publicly makes this cold, calculated statement. With this background, Mr. Speaker, it irks me very much to have to give my approval to this bill but I do so, as do my colleagues. We know the increase is not enough, and it is not given under the circumstances it should be, but we know that these people need it desperately. In these conditions, we propose to do what we can to see that the bill passes and that, hopefully, it will receive Royal Assent within the time required.

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, may I be permitted to briefly resume my position concerning Bill C-207.

During the debate on second reading, I explained with enough detail that the government behaved in an equivocal manner when it introduced point-blank this legislation aimed at increasing the old age security pensions. Some errors and, above all, the omissions of the last session are being remedied to a certain extent.

No doubt pressed by the imminence of the next general election, the government did not really try to improve the Old Age Security Act or to provide greater purchasing power to people 65 or over. It was satisfied with some window dressing. It did stop to consider the case of married couples aged 60. And yet, how many times did we urge the government seriously to consider this possibility? They did not care at all about the serious consequences that such a decision might have on the Quebec government, and on this point, I agree with the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin).

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) hides behind a so-called correspondence that they refused to table at the beginning of the afternoon. This is why I speak of a so-called correspondence with the responsible authorities of the Quebec National Assembly.

At a time when unrest prevails in the province, they stir the fire by provoking, arrogantly—this is the very expression used by Premier Bourassa—the Quebec ministers, Messrs. Castonguay, L'Allier, Toupin and Cournoyer. It is very nice to say that they are always ready to consult and co-operate with the Quebec government. It is clear, however, that they could not care less. This is the way to increase social inequities.

Concretely, what does this mean? A Quebec social welfare pension of \$135 for persons aged 60 to 64 inclusively. At age 65, the federal Department of National Health and Welfare grants them \$285 per month. That difference of

[Mr. Baldwin.]

\$150 is what provoked the Quebec government: it was too much for Mr. Bourassa's cabinet.

I cannot but deplore this situation which could have been avoided if our suggestions had been heeded. I feel sure that if we take away from the Quebec Social Affairs Department responsibility for all families where parents are aged 60 to 65, we will be helping Quebec out of a difficult situation and we will be helping to create the famous just society for which the Canadian people are still waiting.

Mr. Speaker, those were the remarks I wanted to make on third reading.

I should like, on behalf of the people of the riding I am pleased to represent in this House, to indicate that we are, of course, ready to support an increase in the old age security pension, but that we regret the questionable conduct of the government under the present circumstances. And we are all longing for more justice, more equity, more security, to be established, as soon as possible, for all Canadians. That is why we insisted so much for the minister to implement our suggestions, in view of the fact that our amendments were rejected.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, before you call it six o'clock, may I ask permission of the House to revert to routine proceedings in order to table a committee report?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Second report of Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs—Mr. Foster.

[Editor's Note: For text of above report see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING ESCALATION OF PENSIONS, RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS, INCREASE IN GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Munro that Bill C-207, to amend the Old Age Security Act, be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, among the people we all represent the saddest, surely, are those of advanced age who are unable to fend for themselves and who go through all forms of privation in