

Old Age Security Act

Mr. Speaker, another area also affects people who are 65 years old and I think it is not the least important. When people become 65, they are often forced to leave their jobs. These people go to unemployment insurance offices where often steps are taken so that it is impossible for a man or a woman of that age to qualify for the benefits they are entitled to.

As chairman of the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration, I remember that in 1971, when we passed this act, a worker who was 65 could choose to stay in the labour force—and, of course, he did not get a pension under the Canada or the Quebec pension plans—or to go on working; then he had to be helped to find a job and allowed to get his benefits as it is the case for every other Canadian worker.

I would invite this group of citizens to be careful when they meet people who have responsible positions in these unemployment insurance offices and to be available to take on the jobs they could be offered.

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I remain optimistic as far as the economic and social progress of Canada is concerned. We meet everywhere Canadian men and women who are responsible, who are capable of leading and organizing their own lives, who are aware of their responsibilities and their needs and I invite them to go on trusting the present government, so that together we get more and more in the world the position and the influence we deserve.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise once again in this House on a Friday afternoon. My seatmate and I were discussing the formation of a new type of club, the Friday and Monday club. This club would have one difference in that members of it would attend on Friday and Monday when it seems so much easier to get the Speaker's eye than on the other days of the week.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McKinnon: This leads into my opening remarks. I am at my wits end to discover why any of us are here discussing this bill at this time. This is government legislation. I listened with interest yesterday to the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) and the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) when they both agreed on behalf of our party that we would surrender our speaking positions on this bill if we could get agreement with the other parties to send it to committee. I do not think there is a soul in this House who intends to vote against this bill. If there is, I would be glad to surrender my place to him right now and we could move on with this legislation.

In my constituency of Victoria, British Columbia, there is a fine club for the elderly known as the Silver Threads Club. If they had the unanimity at their meetings that this House has on this particular legislation, they could handle the business more quickly than this House of Commons seems able to. Why has the bill not gone to committee? The government does not seem to want that to happen at this time. They are supported, although I think in error,

[Mr. Portelance.]

by the New Democratic Party, those who desire to talk about this bill rather than act on it. Certainly, the rather peculiar position of the government is that, in one sense, they are obstructing their own legislation. If the parties could come to an agreement, I would be glad to surrender the floor right now and have this bill go to committee.

It seems that we are not able to come to any agreement on this, Mr. Speaker. We seem to be the only party who would give up our right to waffle about this bill rather than act on it.

Mr. Nielsen: Why are you filibustering your own bill over there? We are going to vote for it.

An hon. Member: What's the rush?

An hon. Member: The aged are in a rush.

Mr. Nielsen: I will be eligible for the pension myself by the time this is through.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McKinnon: It could be that the Liberal party so seldom does anything for the aged of this country that they must get the last ounce of gratitude out of the elderly people. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we must talk about it instead of acting upon it, I presume I may as well do as some of the other members have and speak for a time on the history of it, not trying to deceive the people of Canada with statistics as has been done by others in the last few days.

The history of the old age pension did not commence in 1952; it was instituted in England in 1908. The Old Age Pensions Act was passed to establish a non-contributory system of pensions and it was amended in 1911, 1919, 1924 and 1925. The last amendments provided for contributory pensions for certain classes of persons. So they were talking about contributory pensions in England then, Mr. Speaker.

When I read the minister's speech yesterday—I was unable to be here as I was called to a committee meeting—I learned that he spent a great deal of time, as did the hon. member for Thunder Bay (Mr. Penner), talking about what the country could afford. I should like to refer to something that was said about that bill in 1908 and hon. members will understand if it has a familiar ring. In 1899 Mr. Joseph Chamberlain said that the British scheme, which proposed to give pensions to everybody, was beyond the resources of the state, that it would make no distinction between the improvident and the thrifty, the drunkard and the spendthrift. He said that they should put aside at once every further attempt to secure compulsory contributions from working classes, which was the system in operation on the continent. So, Mr. Speaker, the more things change, the less they change it seems.

The pension was introduced in Canada in 1927 as a result of the previous election. The act was dated 1927 and stated that the maximum pension payable should be \$240 a year, subject to reduction by the amount of the income of the pensioner in excess of \$125 a year. We started at \$20 a month. Who was responsible for starting this off? Everyone knows that the party in office at that time was the Liberal party. Anybody who wishes to be confused about