

Excise Tax Act and Old Age Security Act

will not go into the old age security fund. Therefore there was no need to collect it for this purpose. Consequently I move the following amendment:

● (3:30 p.m.)

That Bill No. C-268 be not now read a third time but be referred back to the committee of the whole with instructions to the committee to amend the said bill to provide that all moneys raised by the increase in the levy of the Excise Tax Act as provided by the said bill shall be paid into the old age security fund for the purposes of meeting supplementary old age security payments authorized by this parliament and not into the consolidated revenue fund.

While you are giving consideration to the amendment I have placed before you, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word about what has happened to the taxpayers' money which has made this supplementary payment possible with a means test. Let no one deny this. Many years ago the means test was thrown out by parliament as outmoded and useless. It was regarded as an old fashioned way of giving to deserving people a little bit of charity. Now the present government is reinstating the means test. I suggest that the amount of money it is costing the taxpayers to institute this plan is substantial. For instance, forms have been printed, pamphlets have been printed and a bureaucracy organized, and the cost of all this to the taxpayer is one thing this government should endeavour to change.

As I indicated in a previous speech, in the area of social justice the government now has three divisions, with goodness knows how many people to administer these policies. All these measures could be brought under one division and administered by the same people. We suggested that a flat rate payment of \$25 a month be made across the board to all recipients of old age security. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) suggested this was the easy method, the old method of solving this problem and the government wanted to try something new. However, the new method is going to cost the country an additional amount in taxes.

If we read the Auditor General's report we find that the government implemented its program without authorization to spend the money. They had to come back later and get approval. Although I suppose at this juncture it does not matter any more, this fact is indicative of the inefficient way in which this government functions in almost every area.

When I have returned to the constituency of Grey-Bruce during the last two or more weeks I have found that the whole program

[Mr. Winkler.]

has been a confusing one. I tried to find out how an applicant could determine what amount of money he was allowed to have or what amount of money he was allowed to deduct from income. I found that even the government did not know the answers to some of these questions, particularly with regard to capital cost allowance. The other evening we found that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) was not sure whether the recipients of these supplements were going to be forced to acquire a social security number, as the measure under consideration at that time required other people to do. This all proves to me that our program would have been the correct one, and we had a considerable degree of support from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Our program would not have necessitated the employment of another group of civil servants for administrative purposes. Indeed, it could have been instituted without any increase in taxes, and certainly without the introduction of the recent mini-budget.

The government took the view that our program was going to be too costly, and yet if we knew the total cost of the government's program in so far as advertising, the printing of brochures and other papers is concerned, I am quite sure our program would have been less expensive. I feel certain the fund would have lasted well beyond the current fiscal year and perhaps the next one as well. When one reads the report concerning the proliferation of positions in the civil service and the amount of money this is costing the taxpayer, I can assure you that a \$25 payment across the board would have resulted in a considerably lower expenditure than that which the government is now making.

So, Mr. Speaker, in view of the increase in taxes the minister is proposing in this measure I am suggesting, on behalf of my colleagues, that we keep the government honest and that we put forth every effort on behalf of the senior citizens and the taxpayers of Canada toward having the money that will accrue from this measure placed where it rightfully belongs, in the old age security fund. I do not believe the minister expects for one moment that in putting this money into the consolidated revenue fund it will be used only if necessary. The minister will find some other way of spending it and if he cannot he has a lot of colleagues who will. The position we are taking is that we want the government to remain honest with the taxpayers and with the senior citizens of Canada, so in