

Old Age Security

mean when they get an addition in one part of the pension and have it taken away in another? These are the sort of things that have to be considered.

If I were as partisan as the minister I could spend the next little while telling him some of the facts of recorded history—the high and low days of historic Liberalism or hysteric Liberalism. I also want to make a few comments and to suggest how he may improve this piece of legislation. I have given him a suggestion about retroactivity which I am sure will commend itself to the people of Canada, and since he wants to serve them will commend itself to him.

I would say that instead of the formula he uses it might be more meaningful and more helpful to the people whom he mentioned if we used the index in reference to the food, clothing and housing component rather than the statistical formula he mentioned. Because it is in this area that the burden of the increased cost is most painful to the senior citizens of the country. I suggest that this would have been a far better way to improve the situation.

There is nothing much to be gained by suggesting who thought of what first. I have no need to apologize for my role in public life and my concern for the senior citizens in those days when the minister was in the cabinet room but not in the cabinet perhaps—near the seats of the mighty but perhaps not in one of them. Nor do I have to apologize for my party. I think the older people of this country must be heartily sick and tired of having their needs and their sufferings paraded out for political purposes time and time again. I have no intention of going into the auction room and dragging the old political shibboleths out in an appeal for the vote of the older people. I will trust them as well as the middle aged and the young people of this country to make their judgment on to whom to turn if they want an efficient administration, if they want economic know how and if they want some compassion in the governing circles of this land.

On that I will rest my case. I would also suggest, if it finds agreement in other parts of the House, as it has been mentioned in part earlier by the House leader of our party, that we are prepared to allow my golden words to serve for my glorious party. We can then go into committee of the whole, pass this measure and get the pensions out into the hands of the old people as fast as possible. That is what we are interested in. Then perhaps we can get on to something fundamental, some significant legislation in the long delayed fight against inflation in this country.

Mr. Reilly: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I asked the minister two questions. He did not answer the second question. There is in fact some dispute among us on this side of the House about whether he answered the first, but I will not go into that. I asked him whether he personally believed that it was possible for a couple of old people to live in dignity on \$341.78. I would like a yes or no to that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I heard the question originally and perhaps it was not answered. It is a question that is really not a point of order but more a point of debate and could be asked when later the House composes itself into committee of the whole, where every hon. member would have an opportunity to ask questions of the

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

minister, including the hon. member who has just raised this point.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us tonight, like so many bills brought in by Liberal governments, does not go far enough and does not come to grips with the real issue, and yet it does enough that this House will be anxious to get it passed as quickly as possible in order that the pension increase provided for October will come into effect at that time.

In speaking tonight the minister struck me as trying to expiate one of his sins, that of having spent a few years working for the Tory party. But I do not see why he needed to take it out on us or on the senior citizens of Canada who regard this legislation as extremely important. Now that the minister is an ex-Tory and has become a Liberal—

Mr. Stanfield: And God knows what he will be tomorrow.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): —he delivered himself tonight of the remark that the bringing in of this bill is in keeping with the traditions of Liberal governments. I want to tell the minister that I agree with him, for the fact is that for 50 years it has been the tradition of Liberal governments, so far as old age pensioners are concerned, only to act when those governments are pushed to the wall.

• (2110)

We got the first old age pension in this country—yes, introduced by a Liberal government—because my predecessor, the late J. S. Woodsworth, in a parliament where the government was in a minority position, was able to use the support he had from a few others to force that first pension out of the Liberal government of that day. As hon. members know, because it is a story that has been told in this House many times, that was a pension of \$20 a month payable at age 70, with a means test as long as your arm.

This place is not one in which there is any rule which says we must be modest. Therefore I am not going to worry about any such rule in what I say in the next minutes or so. That pension of \$20 a month at age 70, with its vicious means test, stayed that way until I came to this place as a result of a by-election in 1942.

I am not going to be modest. I am going to take some of the credit for starting right in to try to carry on where J. S. Woodsworth had left off. By the summer of 1943, the first year I was here, we had got the first increase from \$20 up to \$25 per month. But that was not because the Liberals were that concerned about old age pensioners. It was because of the pressure we were able to exert here on the floor of the House of Commons, backed by the pressure and support we were getting from some of the provincial governments.

The Liberals can stand, as they do in pension debate after pension debate, and tell us the number of times they have improved the pension, and tell us by how many dollars they have increased the pension compared with the number of dollars by which the pension was increased when the Tories were in power. But the fact is that every