

Old Age Security Act

house for two or three years. Those are proposals which truly affect the day-to-day reality.

However, I should like to urge the hon. member for Timiskaming—I do not know if he can succeed—to convince his colleagues to act in the same direction. We did not get the same version from all the members of the New Democrat party and I must say that during the debate on the budget, I was very disappointed to see that the New Democratic party did not see fit to move an amendment that would have taken into account the feelings shown earlier by the member for Timiskaming. We must ask ourselves several questions. I think that all those who are in this House now know the answer.

Mr. Speaker, let us think a little about the 60-year-old people who, of course, are certainly interested to know the results of today's debate and want the bill to be passed. We know perfectly well that thousands of individuals in Canada look forward to old age security at 60. In my riding, on 12,000 letters which were sent out, I received about 6,000 answers 98 per cent of which were in favour of the implementation of old age security at 60.

Finally, a resolution of the central council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions also recommended to give the necessary support to the implementation of old age security at 60. However, I know that the minister recently announced that the operation of the policy on old age security at 60 could cost Canadians \$1 billion.

It is easy to say what such a proposal can cost. It would perhaps be interesting, for example, to ask the minister how much the 550,000 unemployed are costing the country.

In view of the total cost of unemployment it is reasonable to hope that greater access to old age security pensions would create jobs for younger people who would occupy the positions left vacant by pensioners, and consequently the new measure would not cost Canadians \$1 billion.

We recognize readily that a government has the responsibility to restore or create a suitable social climate. So the amendments which were moved and the discussions which took place in this House today call for old age pensions at 60. We have also discussed the possibility for someone who is not yet 60 to qualify for old age security if his spouse is eligible.

Finally, I think that those measures are pressing at this time. We know that such a policy would result in a decrease in unemployment because granting old age security pensions at the age of 64 would affect some 140,000 people.

It is reasonable to assume that the in the neighbourhood of 100,000 new jobs would be created if those people retired, and they could do it with a suitable pension. That would be a good solution in view of the failures we witnessed in the last five years in trying to curb unemployment. In fact, in spite of all the efforts that were made, including the capital injected in the economy, the rate of unemployment has tripled. I do not say that the government has done nothing. On the contrary, it has spent a lot of money and has tried to think up all kinds of ways of reducing the unemployment rate, but with totally unsatisfactory results.

[Mr. La Salle.]

I therefore think that a great many Canadians are demanding legislation aimed at giving the old age security pension at 60. Before proceeding to third reading of the bill before us, we should make a thorough study of this.

The effect of such a policy would be to restore the social climate, and I do not think I am exaggerating. Those pensioned at 60 would without a doubt be much happier people. That would be preferable by far to paying welfare allowances to young people, which is to give one's blessing to the decadence of a whole generation. I also believe workers would willingly contribute a part of their taxes to obtain old age security at 60. The security this would mean for the individual when he reaches the age 60 is, in my opinion, something which must definitely be taken into consideration.

This would also do away with the necessity for the worker's contribution to a pension fund because of the present lack of security. The 60-year old worker, because of technological changes, of modern machines, would welcome being given security at 60. We are quite aware of the fact that from 60 to 65 that individual works himself to death and often is incapacitated when he ceases to work. Therefore, I believe we have much to gain by supporting this policy and I am grateful to all those who were kind enough to encourage it and who brought up arguments to convince the minister that granting the old age security pension at 60 is a pressing matter.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is therefore decidedly inadequate. Of course, there is an increase for those who are 65, but the Speech from the Throne had led us to believe, unless I am mistaken, that many more Canadians would get the old age security pension in view of the amendments that would be introduced in the House. There will be more pensioners, naturally, because more Canadians will be 65 this year, but that is the only change. The Speech from the Throne had stirred hope amongst people of 60 and more. How many of them, in my riding and elsewhere, I am sure, fret and worry, asking: Is it possible, is it true that we will at long last get the old age security pension at 60?

• (2320)

So I take the liberty of asking again the minister to consider seriously providing old age security at 60 and also of blaming the opposition parties, because they could have forced the government to take action in that connection. I remember that the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) had made much of old age security at 60 during the last election campaign and I said that I would be very pleased to support him to the extent—

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to interrupt the hon. member. I was under the impression that there was an agreement to put the question at 11.20. If there is no such agreement, we should adjourn the debate until tomorrow, and this is what I suggest to the hon. members. First, we agreed to proceed until 11 o'clock, and then until 11.20. If there is no agreement to that effect, the hon. member for Joliette having indicated earlier that he does not feel bound by the commitment made by the spokesmen for the various parties, I suggest that it would be suitable at this time to adjourn our proceedings.