

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 11, 1985

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Friday, February 8, consideration of the motion of Mr. Epp (Provencher) that Bill C-26, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, on Friday I had spoken for some eight or nine minutes on Bill C-26. Today I would like briefly to conclude my remarks.

The main point on which we were speaking at that particular time was not whether or not Hon. Members were against the provisions of Bill C-26 but that provisions of Bill C-26 do not extend to all people in need who are between the ages of 60 and 65. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you would agree that it is not fair that some people be excluded from the provisions of Bill C-26.

On Friday we were speaking of a potential situation in which a widow would be eligible under this Bill while a single person of the same age and living under the same financial circumstances would not be eligible. I cannot for the life of me figure out why the Government does not insist on providing all people in need who are between the ages of 60 and 65 with the same kind of benefits. To discriminate against people because of their marital status is extremely unfair.

The other day we were discussing the fact that the Government, in its wisdom, has chosen to make certain people ineligible for this benefit. That is most unfortunate. We were also discussing the fact that the Government has decided that it has other priorities for its funds. I am sure that Hon. Members across would agree that the Government's spending of some \$40 million or \$50 million on coloured uniforms for the Armed Forces is a rather strange priority when those funds could be used to ensure that there are adequate benefits available for all people in need who are between the ages of 60 and 65.

[Translation]

Last Friday, Mr. Speaker, we were talking about the fact that, in his speech, my colleague from Montreal-Sainte-Marie

(Mr. Malépart) had compared three different persons: the first was single, the second was separated or divorced, and the third was widowed. Their financial status was identical, but not their benefits. For the purpose of his speech, my colleague had decided to call his three constituents Mrs. LeBlanc, Mrs. Legris and Mrs. Lebrun.

Friday, Mr. Speaker, I pointed out to you that I had a picture which had been given to us by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Coates), showing a Mr. LeBlanc, a Mr. Lebleu and a Mr. Legris. Messrs. LeBlanc, Lebleu and Legris are in the Armed Forces, and the Government found enough money to buy uniforms of different colours for those three gentlemen, but not enough to help the needy and the underprivileged.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that is a rather strange priority for a Government which went on the campaign trail promising just about anything to anybody for any reason.

But it did make a commitment to the elderly—higher benefits. In that respect, I must say that the Conservative Government has once again hoodwinked the Canadian people by failing to provide similar benefits to Canadians whose needs are similar.

Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that, in its approach, the Government has certainly neglected the Canadian people. And I am not the only one who says so, because in an article published this morning in a Toronto daily newspaper, Mr. Jeffrey Simpson refers to the Government priorities, a Government which has seen fit to buy uniforms for the military instead of helping needy Canadians.

[English]

The article to which I referred indicates in part that we should buy coloured uniforms for politicians if that is to be the priority rather than give funds to the needy. According to the author of this article, we could buy a uniform for the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Coates) in the colours of the American flag. That would be appropriate for that particular individual. For the Minister of Public Works (Mr. La Salle) we could buy a uniform made of pigskin. That would be good as it would indicate an intention of fulfilling one campaign promise that was broken by the Government. I will not bore you with all the other details, Mr. Speaker, but I will say that the author is of the view that we could have sheepskin jackets for all the Tory back-benchers who follow the Government so blindly and who do not have minds of their own on various important issues.

It is quite obvious that the provisions of Bill C-26 need to be examined very seriously. I invite the government back-benchers who are heckling at this particular moment to rise in their