

Old Age Security Act Amendment

Apparently she referred to this speech because she claimed the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) had spoken of the desirability of a guaranteed minimum income in Canada. She then went on to say the following in referring to the minister's speech:

I remember that there was great applause at that point, because the welfare and social workers believe that the Senate is talking good sense when it suggests that we have a minimum guaranteed income for those on old age security in this country.

Then, the hon. member went on to say:

One of the most interesting addresses we had at the Canadian Welfare Conference in Vancouver was that of Professor Richard Titmuss of the London School of Economics. He told us that there is now going through the British House of Commons a piece of social security legislation which in its outlines is very like the guaranteed minimum income which has been proposed by the Senate committee on aging.

It is a piece of legislation under which they calculate the income of those people on social assistance, that of the old age pensioners and those in other categories of social need. They calculate the income of these people—incidentally, they do not take into consideration the home in which they live—and take account of the taxes they have to pay.

She went on to give further details and then said:

At regular intervals a cheque is sent out to these people and at the end of the year they are asked whether their status has changed.

If their status has not changed, they continue to receive the cheque. What is the cheque? It is the difference between what these people are receiving and what the government considers to be a suitable guaranteed minimum income.

● (5:00 p.m.)

Then, I ask hon. members to listen to these words:

That is the sort of thing we should be doing in Canada if our resources permit us to do it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Gray: I note the applause from the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis). I think that these words afford one of the strongest demonstrations we could have of the value, humanity and usefulness of the government's program.

Some of these same people whom I have just quoted, in this debate, have attempted now to heap scorn on the same approach that they praised a few months ago, an approach which they urged the government at that time to incorporate into legislation as soon as possible. No wonder members on this side of the house who recall the use of the phrase "income

[Mr. Gray.]

test" are tempted to use words like "hypocrisy". At the same time they may have the urge to say things about motives and sincerity when they hear such criticism by the members of the N.D.P. who spoke so fulsomely in praise of this measure a few months ago.

The members of the N.D.P. are posing today as having some superiority of outlook and purpose. However, the Canadian people may well want to look with great suspicion at a party which apparently is so desperate for support that it is willing to say and do anything, seizing upon the genuine concern over a serious matter like the plight of the aged, to get and hold popular support.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare pointed out on a previous occasion that the leader of the N.D.P., who was premier of Saskatchewan for some 14 years, headed a government which administered without any noticeable complaint legislation based on the means test approach which the members of that party are now criticizing. Investigators employed by this same C.C.F.-N.D.P. government for some 14 years fanned out over the province of Saskatchewan snooping and prying into the lives of people seeking assistance.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that when the Conservative government headed by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) was in power it also continued to administer means test legislation and did nothing to eliminate it during the six years it was in office, even though it had at that time the largest majority in Canadian history and could have done so very easily.

It is the present Liberal government which, rather than extend the means test as suggested by some opposition members, has moved to make possible its elimination from assistance measures through the passing of the Canada assistance plan, which is based on the needs test approach.

I am confident, therefore, that if older Canadians look at the income test and its application with an open mind and not in the distorted manner which is urged by the opposition, most of them will find it a reasonable and acceptable way of obtaining further help for themselves and their older fellow citizens.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that:

[*Translation*]

This program, administered under federal jurisdiction, is important because it will be handled directly by the federal government and will be available to people in every part of Canada. By the same token, it will be a