

*Old Age Security*

flying over the city of Victoriaville, to announce that the Liberal party was now in favour of the 60 year pensionable age. Indeed, this motion is almost identical to what was then published in the advertisement. We are now told this would not do, this would be too expensive, this is unacceptable, that pensionable age cannot be brought down to 60, that those people have to work, and so on.

But nonetheless, Madam Speaker, knowing members of parliament as well as I do, knowing as well as I do the political game, you must realize that some time soon the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) will hopefully be introducing a bill that would probably bring pensionable age down to 60 in cases where the other spouse already receives a pension at age 65. How amusing it will then be to see all members opposite support the legislation. They will have adequate funds. They will see no monetary problem. In other words, anything coming from them is reasonable, and they have all the money needed for it. But coming from the opposition, it is unacceptable. These are the only remarks I wish to make.

Considering the social turmoil, the social tragedy we are now going through, the social stresses we are witnessing, it is high time that people in public life had the decency to be true to their word and fulfill their commitments.

And the second thing I would like to emphasize, Madam Speaker, is the obvious social drama, and I think everyone will agree on that—people who reach the age of 50, 55 and who are threatened by an industrial disease, a heart attack or anything else, or who see their performance decrease even if they are not sick and who are looking forward to 60 in the hope of getting their pension at 60, who are confident to reach 65 but give up hope of ever getting to retirement age.

Madam Speaker, let us think about it for a moment. All members of this House often accept invitations to 50th, 35th wedding anniversaries, and what not. In fact, nearly a whole week is squeezed into two days. When we leave at night after a reception, a great party, who stays behind to pick up everything, dismantle and clean the tables? It is interesting to observe people's behaviour. It is not young people, it is people of 55, 60, whose spouse generally draws the pension but who do not get it because they are not 65.

And because they have an inadequate income to live on, the wife must wash dishes at those receptions, dancing or other parties, anniversaries, weddings, to try and make a little more money to live on.

I say, Madam Speaker, that it is time for us Canadians to have not only enough heart, but enough openness of mind to recognize that people who have reached the age of 55 are economically speaking those most vulnerable in our economy; they are the first ones to be laid off, the ones most likely to fall sick and the ones most irregular in the working world.

That is, and I quite agree with the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Maine), experienced labour, valuable labour, labour that wants to work, and I hope that one day the young will try to imitate older workers—that would surely improve the current working environment. The fact still remains, Madam Speaker, that those 60 years of age are precisely the group of people who have reached a critical standard of living, and I think that the first duty

[Mr. Fortin.]

of this parliament, this majority government which has the capacity, the financial means and which undertook to accomplish it, since that is unanimously recognized in this House, is to grant the pension at 60 to anyone who has reached that age, so that we can not only help those people but also make sure that they have a decent old age with security.

In another connection, the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) calls for increased benefit payments. Of course, Madam Speaker, I did not calculate the effects of that, but it is obvious that in theory one can only be in favour of such an increase. When one fills out, as I often do at my office in Victoriaville, guaranteed income supplement applications, one realizes very often that because someone managed to get a little job to increase his pension it is reduced.

I will give you a typical example, and conclude on that. How many cases I got at my office every week the Lord brings! A man came to see me and told me that his old age pension is inadequate to live on. Then, in discussing with him in a friendly way, I learned that he found a temporary and part-time job with the school board to have the children cross the street and avoid unfortunate accidents. He thus earns an income during the week, the month or the year, but owing to a few other sources of income, his guaranteed income supplement is reduced.

I heard a while ago the argument raised by the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Maine) who stated that many individuals between 60 and 65 years of age still want to work. Well, Madam Speaker, I think that is true and if we agree with that objective, the old age pension should be granted at 60 years of age, the present rates should be raised to enable those who are still healthy and who wish to have additional work even if they are pensioned, to keep busy and do something they like.

It is a wonderful thing for a person of 60 or 67 years of age to help children across the streets, to work, and chat as friends do, on a daily basis, with children of kindergarten, primary and elementary age. That is absolutely extraordinary. It is the meeting of the elders of the country with those who will build tomorrow. But because a person does so, the guaranteed income supplement is reduced; and that because our scales work on a "cent" basis; truly, those who would help themselves are being punished.

Madam Speaker, I feel we should be moved by a positive spirit in dealing with that legislation, and that we should, as one man, ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) to see to it that all those who reach the age of 60 are not only encouraged to continue working but are guaranteed financial security; then, instead of looking as if we want to get rid of them, we will show them that we want to keep them within the ranks of our society. After all, they are the ones who built our country. If today's youth did as much as our fathers to build that country of ours, we would not have to worry about its future.

Mr. Béchard: I would like to correct a slight mistake I have just made, in all honesty towards the Progressive Conservative Party and the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. McKenzie). One of the most senior members in this House, the hon. member for Winnipeg