

Old Age Security

● (3:50 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker Michener therefore ruled that since the house had not taken any decision on the principle of that bill, it was in order for my bill to be debated on second reading. It was so debated, and as a matter of fact it came back two or three times. Debate was in order until the point where a decision had been taken on the government bill.

I stress the point that citation 234, subparagraph (1), is very clear, the only prohibition in this area being against a member from this side of the house moving something in a field on which a decision has already been taken.

I come back to my starting point. The house in this session may have taken a decision on the amount of the pension. It may have taken a decision on the eligible age, and there may in fact be on the order paper a motion that we impose some kind of financial test. But no decision has been taken on that motion of the Minister of National Health and Welfare. No decision in any way, shape or form has been taken on the means test.

I may say that when we first heard the hon. member for Grey-Bruce read his amendment—and I am disclosing a caucus secret here—some of my colleagues said, “Do you not think that you should move an amendment to that, and bring in the amount the pension should be, or something?” My immediate reply was, “No, let us not do anything to put the amendment out of order”. In other words, I felt right away that my hon. friend’s amendment was clearly in order.

This amendment is in order because it pinpoints a question not decided by the house in this session. Not only is it in order procedurally, it is in order morally and socially because it pinpoints the burning issue that surrounds the raising of the amount of the old age pension. I agree with what the hon. member for Grey-Bruce said. I agree with the position taken by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition. We must take a stand against the means test.

A pension increase is something that is needed in Canada at the present time. We all know that something will soon be done about the amount of the pension. We know that in the course of time something will be done about the eligible age, but on this issue, about any kind of means test, parliament should take a stand in opposition to it, and we should take that stand now.

I draw your attention further, Mr. Speaker, to the sort of amendment this is. It asks that

consideration be given. In other words, it asks that consideration be given by the government. The only time the house can ask the government to consider staying away from a means test is before the government brings in legislation and gets a decision about the means test.

I again congratulate the hon. member for raising the matter on this occasion, because after the minister’s motion has been proceeded with and has had, in the form of legislation, first and second reading, we could not move this amendment.

Because of other moral, political and social importance of this issue, I think it should be debated in the house today. Procedurally, the motion is well drawn. It avoids the pitfalls into which it could easily have fallen. We have made no decision during this session about the means test, and the house should have the right to debate this issue and make a decision about it today or tomorrow. I hope the decision of the house will be against the means test in any form.

Mr. Speaker: Before proceeding with discussion on the point of order could the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, for the guidance of the Chair, identify more precisely the decision of Mr. Speaker Michener, to which reference was made a moment ago?

Mr. Knowles: I shall be able to do so if I can get to my office or to the library. I am relying on my memory, but I am sure of this: The decision was made in the course of the 1957-58 session, and it was on a motion for the second reading of a bill in my name, probably called the Canada annual vacations with pay act. The decision was made about that time, and it was Mr. Speaker Michener who was in the chair.

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the right hon. Leader of the Opposition have argued that this motion does not repeat the motion dealt with in this house in January. I will not argue that point because I know Your Honour is cognizant of it, and is looking into it. The house ought to consider whether this motion can be allowed, in accordance with the rules. Also, as has been stated a number of times, we ought to consider the general good of the people affected by this motion. Both these things are more important than any procedural matter.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre referred to citation 234 of Beauchesne’s fourth edition. I know he wants to be