

the lowest income brackets. Surely no one would contend that a reduction of \$6 in taxes for a year is any appreciable amount of relief, or \$16 or \$18 for one in the next bracket. Would that be considered relief by any sane person? Would that be considered as a great amount, or the greatest possible amount of relief? Surely not.

Then he said that he was granting some relief to all. I do not know whether he meant there some relief to all people in Canada, or just some relief to those in the income tax brackets. If he meant some relief to those in the income tax brackets, then I think he would be right; but if he meant relief to all the people of Canada he is most definitely wrong.

I want to speak for a moment about those persons who are not in income tax brackets. They are the ones who are being more harshly treated than any other people in Canada. And when one considers that those persons to whom I refer form about fifty per cent of the families and people generally in Canada, one realizes that a tremendous number of people are receiving no relief whatsoever. In fact, their living standards are being greatly lowered by the continual increase in prices, and the rising cost of living, as I have already indicated.

At page 2554 of *Hansard*, the minister said:

The exemption levels established last year are high enough to exempt completely from tax more than half the people earning incomes in Canada.

That is an astounding statement, when the minister has the audacity to stand in the House of Commons—even though it was his first budget, and he may be inexperienced—and say that over half the people of Canada are receiving no benefit whatsoever, and then in the same breath say that fifty per cent of the people of Canada, if they are single, are living on less than \$750 a year.

The government of Canada should be thoroughly ashamed of itself to make that admission to other countries, and to the people generally. It should be ashamed to admit in the same breath that over fifty per cent of the people of Canada, if they are married, are receiving less than \$1,500 a year, and should be ashamed to say that it expects that a family could be maintained on that amount. That is an outrageous disgrace.

Mr. LESAGE: It is not true, if they have children.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am taking the minister's own word; if you want to contradict him, you can go to it.

Mr. LESAGE: I do not have to contradict him; but what you said is not true.

[Mr. Johnston.]

Mr. JOHNSTON: I want to speak further about these people. For instance, for a moment let us consider the old age pensioner. I believe the average pension runs between \$23 and \$30, across Canada. And when I give those figures as the monthly payments, I am putting them terrifically high. Would anyone contend for a moment that Canada, such a rich country, cannot produce sufficient to give our elderly citizens a better standard of living than that? I think that is one of the most disgraceful things that ever occurred, to expect our elderly people—

Mr. MARTIN: Has the hon. gentleman ever thought of having the government of Alberta increase the amount?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am glad the minister mentioned that, because Alberta was the first province to do that very thing. And I say to the minister that even Alberta would have gone farther at that time, and would go farther now, too, if the federal government would not turn around and take it away from the old age pensioners.

Mr. MARTIN: Would the hon. gentleman be good enough to answer the question?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I do not think I got the significance of the question. Would the minister mind repeating it?

Mr. MARTIN: I suggest to my hon. friend that perhaps he might ask the government of Alberta to do the very thing he is asking this parliament to do.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I answered the minister, because I said that Alberta was the first province in Canada to do that very thing. They increased it to a point where, at the present time, the pension in Alberta is \$30 a month.

Mr. LOW: And without asking the federal government to share in it.

Mr. JOHNSTON: And the point was this, that if the provincial government had given more than that there would have been difficulty, because there is a federal regulation whereby, if more than \$425 is received by the pensioner, the federal government's contribution would be cut down. So that it was unwise for the provincial government to give the pensioners more, with one hand, only to have the federal government take it away from them with the other.

Mr. MARTIN: The hon. member knows that is not so.

Mr. JOHNSTON: You explain it, then.