

Supply

Fourth, "maximum pension and contribution limits will be indexed by changes in the average industrial wage starting in 1989". It is stated "that the changes will not be retroactive". That is at least one definite statement, that "the changes will not be retroactive".

The same Budget has another booklet entitled *Action plan for pension reform*. Building better pensions for Canadians. At page 13 there appears, in big black headlines, "A Time to Act". It states that "the Government is determined to ensure that pension benefits and coverage are sufficiently improved so that all Canadians have an adequate retirement income. Accordingly, it states, "the Government undertakes to monitor closely the reaction of provinces and the private sector to the proposals for pension reform presented in the Budget, and it will be ready to discuss with them whatever additional steps may be required". This was stated under the heading "A Time to Act". The Government states that it will "monitor" the attitudes of the private sector and of the provinces.

The Government says that it will be monitoring, over a period of who knows how long, to see what the attitude of the provinces will be before moving on its budget proposals contained in the section entitled "A Time to Act", under an "action plan for pension reform". I will help the Government monitor more quickly by bringing a certain situation to its attention. This situation is taking place in a number of provinces. I know that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) is all too familiar with it. Approximately a week ago, one of my constituents brought me his and his wife's cheque stubs. Mr. Raymond Rhodes of Site 18, Comp. 31, RR 2, Castlegar, had a cheque from the Government of Canada which represented a monthly increase from \$440.64 to \$441.39. Of course, that was to accompany the indexed section of his pension. It is an increase of 75 cents. That cheque came in April, 1984. On April 26, 1984, a cheque was issued from the Province of British Columbia in which he received a supplement from that province which, as all Members know, is as a result of a federal and provincial agreement on how pensions work or do not work in this country. His income from the Province of British Columbia was reduced from a March payment of \$21.83 to a payment of \$18.83, a reduction of \$3. As a result of the "very well co-ordinated" system in this country, and the attitudes of the provinces—which I do not think need to be monitored—at least the attitude of the Province of B.C. does not have to be "monitored" any longer—and this generous system, he lost \$2.25 in April, 1984 over March. The figures are very comparable. In fact the amounts are exactly the same for his wife, Mrs. Ruby Z. Rhodes of the same address. Together, they have lost \$4.50 per month as a result of this indexation and as a result of the attitude of at least one of the three provinces at least it used to be a have province. It is questionable nowadays. But as a result of the attitude of B.C. and the Conservative-Social Credit coalition, the Liberal-Conservative-Social Credit coalition—it incudes them all—government of that province, the Rhodes lost this money.

• (1730)

Whose other attitudes are we going to monitor? We know that British Columbia has not been alone in their attitude. Have we really changed our attitudes very much, even looking back all the way? Certainly we have made some social progress. But have we really changed that much since that day in 1926 when J. S. Woodsworth and A. A. Heaps, one "the leader" and one "the group", the independent Labour Members of this House at that time, held the balance of power between Mackenzie King's Liberals and the Conservative Party? They were able to wring a concession from the Government. I keep a copy of the letter in my office. I have had it since I was a kid. It is one of the things of which anyone in the Social Democratic movement in this country would be very proud. A balance of power held by two members was able to wring out of Mr. King at that time a concession that he would introduce the beginning of an old age pension—albeit with a means test—and would consider an unemployment insurance system. The Prime Minister at that time made the commitment. We got old age pensions of \$20 a month, I believe with a means test. We also got a promise to consider unemployment insurance. That consideration was for the "near future". But we had to wait from 1926 until the Second World War in order to get that concession that was being placed under "active consideration."

I and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party and in our predecessor Party the CCF, a Party in which I also had the opportunity to be active while I was still a young adult, have felt proud of the contribution that we have made, not only then but on a number of times and in many situations ever since.

I could go on and list a number of those occasions but I think I will relate to just one instance having to do with the late Judy LaMarsh. I believe Ms. LaMarsh, the then Minister of National Health and Welfare, was hosting a party in her office to celebrate the passage of the Canada Pension Plan. The hon. lady had the grace, courtesy and knowledge to propose a toast. Her toast was to another one of our colleagues. He is currently a colleague, the House Leader of this Party, the Hon. Stanley Knowles. As all Canadians know, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has played an important role in the development and improvement over the years of the Canada pension system. Most notably he and his colleagues at that time fought the good fight in order that we could begin to build a Canada Pension Plan that would work then and in the future to provide a more generous pension regime for at least all working Canadians. We have continued to add to that and will continue to add to it in the future in some ways along the lines of the report of the task force, hopefully more along the lines of the minority report filed by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Nanaimo-Alberni (Mr. Miller), in order to provide better pensions and more secure pensions that keep in line with the cost of living and allow people to collect pensions before they die.

In his report my colleague began with a quote from the House of Commons Debates for November 9, 1964. It was