

Speech from the Throne

forget his name as the speech was filled with abuse, vindictiveness and downright lies. In passing, I might say that he announced that he had taken a leave of absence after more than 20 years as a journalist to enter politics actively as a supporter of the Conservative party. I strongly suggest that he keep his tie with his former occupation as he will most certainly need it. Even the Tories wouldn't accept a man like that around here. In his speech, he castigated the government for giving an increase of only 42 cents per month to the old age pensioners of Canada. This, of course, is a downright falsehood, but it seems to me that this government has allowed this falsehood to spread without attempting to see that the people of Canada are told the truth.

An hon. Member: Tell us the truth.

Mr. Whicher: What are the facts about the senior citizens of this nation of ours, and how has the government treated them? The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that at the present moment approximately 600 thousand of our senior citizens are drawing \$135 per month as single persons and \$255 per month as a married couple at age 65, and not at age 70 as was the case when the last Tory government was in power in this country. And I repeat that they draw \$255 per month as a couple and not \$130 as was the case, once again, when the last Tory government had control of the House of Commons. These, Mr. Speaker, are the highest old age pensions in the world. The government should be proud of this and every member of the House of Commons should be just as proud. It is true that approximately one-third of our senior citizens are still drawing \$80 per month or \$160 as a couple, but every one of these people has another source of income.

Indeed a small minority of them have large incomes. The remaining one-third of our senior citizens are drawing supplementary benefits, somewhere in between the minimum of \$80 per month and the maximum of \$135 per month. Am I ashamed of these figures? Am I ashamed of the way that we treat our fathers and mothers, who truly made Canada great? Once again I say, these are the highest old age pensions in the whole world. But this is not all that we do for our senior citizens.

• (1420)

Mr. Peters: He acknowledges the pensions.

An hon. Member: Shut up and listen.

Mr. Whicher: In the province of Ontario, for example, as of January 1 of this year every person over the age of 65 gets absolutely free medical and hospital services. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on providing homes for the aged, both by governments and by private concerns. In many areas of the province, tax rebates are given to senior citizens on their municipal taxes. Transportation expenses are sometimes cut in half and entertainment costs are greatly reduced. But this is not all.

Mr. Alexander: I want to hear more about your riding.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: What my hon. friend means of course, Mr. Speaker, is that he does not like to hear the facts.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: As of January 1 of this year, no senior citizen in Canada who derives any supplementary benefits from our old age security legislation will pay one single nickel in income tax, and we should be proud of that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: Are my friends to the left not going to cheer for the senior citizens? When you Tories were in power, they certainly paid. Without any doubt I can say here this afternoon that the senior citizens of Canada have the benefit of the just society promised by our government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Whicher: There is another group in our society who, like our senior citizens, have given their all to their country. I refer to the almost one million veterans who are still alive in Canada. As a matter of fact, there are only two countries in the whole world who think enough of their veterans to have a minister of veterans affairs. I am not referring to England, the United States or Germany. One is France and the other is Canada, and we should be proud of that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: We should also be proud of the fact that, as a result of the new legislation that came through last year under the then minister of veterans affairs, the pensions paid to our veterans are the highest pensions anywhere in the world today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: I should like to refer to this nice booklet which some of my friends have not read, and no doubt choose to ignore, called "Pensions for Disability and Death Related to Military Service". I ask you, when you have time, to look at some of the pensions that we are paying to the veterans of Canada, who of course deserve them. Other veterans in the rest of the world deserve them also, but we pay the most. May I remind you of the fact that a single pensioner in Canada from either World War I or II, who receives a full pension, now receives \$292 a month absolutely tax free, and that a pensioner with a wife and three children receives \$460 a month absolutely tax free. This is not too much, but the fact is that this government has given the veterans of Canada more than anyone else in the world, and I am proud of that.

Mr. Baldwin: I gather you like the government.

Mr. Whicher: We in Canada live in a most peculiar situation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: You could have substituted the word "Liberal".

Mr. Whicher: It may be a peculiar situation, but not as peculiar as some of my friends to the left.

Mr. Baldwin: How far left?