

Old Age and Veterans' Pensions

Mr. Speaker, the motion before us concerns several other categories of citizens who need help. This is the reason why I give it my wholehearted support.

I regret that neither the mover nor the Opposition Leader who both support the same resolution, have not the same aims and did not indicate by what means these pension increases would be made possible, because, finally, everybody will ask again: Where will the money come from? This is the problem.

Why not pay \$150 pensions to old people? I remember that in 1962, when the old age security pension was \$65 a month and that my colleagues and I called for it to be raised to \$100, we were literally told that we were crazy, that we were asking for the moon. Now, in 1970, the same pension has reached \$111.41 a month. This means that the government is crazier then we were then by \$11.41 a month.

The question remains the same: Where will the money come from? When it was decided to increase the pension of hon. members, did anyone ask where would the money come from? Nobody did. It was like an electronic system—so smoothly it went through.

The pensions are there. As far as the wage increases are concerned, they were granted without too much difficulty. The delivery was not too difficult. Things run smoothly when we are the ones concerned, but for the disadvantaged and the aged, the story is different.

• (4:20 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, can an older person live on \$111.41 per month in present circumstances? What about needy mothers, widows, the blind and the disabled who receive only \$75 or \$65 per month? How can they live on so little? It is impossible.

If the minister believes that it can be done, why does he not publish the "recipe" in order to teach people how to live, in 1970, on \$65 per month? Of course, no such recipe is sent with the cheque because everyone knows that it is impossible to live on such a ridiculously low pension.

Mr. Speaker, is it normal that needy mothers on social assistance, who often must provide for four or five children, should receive only \$130 or \$135 per month?

Let us suppose that a mother has five children and they are placed in a foster home. The home would get in such a case \$50 a month for each child, which means \$250 per month. And when the mother has the courage to support her own children and look after them herself, she only receives \$135 per

[Mr. Caouette.]

month. If this is what we call social justice and a just society, I fail to grasp the meaning of words.

It is a shame to treat people so, although this is what we see in our midst. Mr. Speaker, such situations exist in the riding of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and each minister can see in his own constituency cases of the most distressing poverty. Why? Is it because there is a shortage of goods? No. Because the stores are empty? No. Because the factories are unable to produce? No. It is because people have no money! That is the problem. And instead of tackling it all kinds of other things are given consideration.

The Leader of the Opposition was not much clearer than the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre when he offered his solution. In their opinion, taxes should be increased, a floor on poverty and a ceiling on wealth should be established. When a certain level of wealth has been reached, we should take from the rich and give to the poor so that they may reach the set minimum.

Mr. Speaker, as far as the floor is concerned, I agree. We should set one, so that everyone may at least be on the same minimum level. From there on, people should be free. A vital minimum should be set, allowing for decent living conditions and not dismal, pitiful and shrunken ones.

That principle once applied, let personal initiative do the rest. If someone becomes a millionaire, good for him, if another becomes rich, good for him; if still another remains at a lower level, it is just too bad. If he cannot do better, it is unfortunate, but at least he is free to use his personal initiative.

We should leave it to competition in private enterprise to settle the price problem instead of using government gimmicks or unrealistic schemes which only lead to price increases.

When will prices go down? When will the government consider the consumer problem instead of thinking only of controlling production?

In western Canada, \$100 million were paid to farmers with instructions not to grow wheat for a year. In eastern Canada, they were asked not to produce milk. Even in the constituency of Bonaventure and in Abitibi farmers were requested not to produce milk. It is dangerous to reduce production. Any such reduction entails an increase in unemployment and this not only in Quebec.

I recently went to the Magdalen Islands where 80 per cent of the population lives