

causes us to shun those who remind us of growing old, to isolate them wherever possible into ghettos or reserves called nursing homes or homes for the aged. It is something of a shock to realize that as a nation we collectively spend more money on preparations to keep ourselves looking young than we do in assisting our senior citizens. We shove them out of useful careers whenever we can and as soon as possible. Then we go on to ignore their needs as well as their potentialities.

In Canada, there are nearly two million citizens over 65 years of age. I think that the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock was using different statistics than I am using. He mentioned a figure of one million. Recent information from Statistics Canada shows that there are two million citizens older than the age of 65 years, or just over 8 per cent of our population, and it is estimated that Canada will have more than 3 million persons aged 65 and over by 1991. Of that number, Mr. Speaker, only about one-tenth have a physical or mental handicap, and only 5 per cent of them are in institutions. There is a heavy obligation on our society to provide a wide range of suitable services for these persons, and more adequate pensions for those who need them. But even more than that, there is an obligation to make opportunities available to these people, whereby our senior citizens can themselves continue to serve the communities in which they live and in which they themselves have worked.

Our country, it seems to me, could be immeasurably wealthier in social and human terms if we were wise enough to mine this rich vein of talent, ability and dedication that exists among our citizens 65 years and over. Generally speaking, if an older person makes a serious effort to remain in society and participate actively with the rest of us, we do our best to make his or her short time as miserable as possible with compulsory retirement, inadequate pensions, lack of community services for senior citizens, and little opportunity to use the skills and knowledge gained during an entire lifetime. This is the common lot of many of our senior citizens, and it is not right that it should be so. A psychiatrist who specializes in problems of the aged said recently that one-third of our senior citizens are living in quiet despair, stemming both from physical and spiritual poverty, that in turn stems from the chilling realization of powerlessness and non-participation.

The country is moving toward earlier retirement at the same time that the life expectancy of the population is increasing. I do not argue against the trend toward earlier retirement, but it seems to me that we must recognize and appreciate that there are related social problems. Although the problems accompanying retirement have long been recognized, little has been done either to provide new opportunities for work after retirement, or to prepare people for the period following an active career.

There is one program which does exist and which I think deserves some mention here. I am referring to the Canadian Executive Service Overseas, which is a non-profit organization operated by a group of Canadian business leaders with the support of the Canadian government through its Canadian International Development Agency, known as CIDA. The Canadian Executive Service Overseas, abbreviated to CESO, recruits Canadian

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volunteers—and this is important—either retired or active, who have technical, professional or executive skills and are willing to go abroad to work in developing countries in either the public or private sector. The tour of duty is for a maximum of six months.

In 1967-68 there were 31 volunteers. In 1969, 115 persons accepted the challenge. I do not have more recent statistics, Mr. Speaker, but I think it is very plain to see that the program, although a very modest one, meets important needs not only for the developing countries, which I am sure it does, but also for the volunteers themselves. I think that what we have here is the germ of a proposal which could involve thousands rather than just hundreds, and involve these people not only abroad in developing countries but right here in our own country in the very communities where these people have been active for most of their working years.

Psychiatrists point out that enforced retirement and the absence of social roles often affect the mental health of those over 65. The incidence of psychopathology rises with age, as do depression and suicide. Older people need, and they want a chance to remain a part of the working world. Many, of course, require the additional financial resources which come from such endeavour. There are those as well who have deeper needs: the need to be needed, the need to do something worth while, to enjoy the experience of warmth, understanding and companionship, all of which comes from joining with others in designing a useful project and accomplishing some specific task.

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It is rather interesting to note that federal funds have been granted under the Opportunities for Youth program, and under the Local Initiatives Program for studies of the needs of the aged. In the main these studies have discovered what has long been known, in other words very little that is new has come from these studies so far as I have been able to detect. Perhaps if we assisted some of our senior citizens to do their own studies there would be some startling breakthrough in our understanding of the aged as well as some solutions to the most pressing of their social, psychological and economic needs.

The majority of the senior citizens in Canada were active before retirement and they continue to be active in one way or another after retirement, and yet, many of these people have unfortunately become isolated and helpless. Efforts must be made to draw our senior citizens more fully into the mainstream of life. Most of these active persons need continuing opportunities to be active. Society must learn to involve its older members so that they may continue to have normal opportunities for self expression, intellectual stimulation, service to others, and joy in living. There is no doubt that such a goal is a challenge to governments and also to the senior citizens themselves. The success of such a program depends on our willingness to allow older adults to participate in the planning, the organization, and the implementation of programs which will serve the aged and in which the aged themselves can and should serve.

Wherever this approach has been tried, in Canada or elsewhere, it is encouraging indeed to observe the inven-