

human issues and we shall start immediately to try to prevent the Government from doing this. As I said earlier, the various groups also advised the Government against such action before it introduced the bill.

What does this represent in monetary terms? We hear that it means a lot of money. Granted. If we look at what the Government is paying out to these 85,000 widows and widowers, we find a figure of \$325 million, but what the Government is not saying is that there are now people between the ages of 60 and 64 who receive social welfare benefits which is also a social program, but whose costs are shared equally. As far as the benefits to these 85,000 people are concerned, the federal Government is saving \$20 million and the provinces another \$20 million.

There are still 80,000 people who need our assistance. If the bill is not amended, 80,000 people in Canada will be forgotten, which means about 30,000 in Quebec. This is a lot of people. It would cost \$300 million to provide assistance to these 80,000 people. As far as the benefits to these 80,000 people are concerned, the federal Government is saving \$18 million and the provincial Governments another \$18 million. What is the income of these people? I shall take Quebec as an example. What is the present income of these people? They are not wealthy. We are not talking about extending the universal pension benefits.

● (1740)

They are now receiving social welfare benefits of \$427 a month. What would they be getting tomorrow in concrete terms if we made them eligible for those benefits? Would we make them rich overnight? Would they be sitting pretty, as some Conservative members would like us to believe, if we granted them those benefits of \$533 a month, or \$106 more than they are getting? It would mean a lot to these people although they would still live below the poverty line. I am not asking the government . . . If I wanted to play politics, I would tell the government to grant this allowance to all those in need between 60 and 64 years of age, whether they live alone or with their spouse. In his speech, on Monday, the Minister quoted the figure of \$1.5 billion. That is how much it would cost to give benefits to single people and couples. I do not want to score political points with that issue any more than any other member either New Democrat or Liberal. The government has made up its mind and we respect it. After all that party was elected on September 4 and it decided to help the people who live alone.

The Liberals had promised during the campaign to help all those in need, by first reducing eligibility age to 64. It is matter of choice and I am not going to question it. I respect the decision the Conservative have made. What we do not accept, however, is that you should stop half way, and this is where the discrimination lies. The strange thing about it is that not so long ago, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) tabled some amendments to various Bills so that they would be in

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accordance with the Charter of Rights which was passed in this House to prevent discrimination. This is the reason why I still hope that the Minister will reverse his decision or consult with his Department's officials to get a clear picture of the situation. Quite frankly I do not understand why he should insist on a discriminatory approach Mr. Speaker, in monetary terms what Liberals Members were asking for would not have amounted to that much money. I have met privately with some Conservative Members and I am convinced they would agree, but I am not expecting them to come forward and admit it here. My party has been in power before and I know that it is easier to make one's mark at caucus meetings than by delivering a speech in the House. Now the Conservatives are in power, their speeches reflect the Ministry's wishes. Some Conservative Members, in fact a good proportion of them, are worried about this legislation and would like the Government to reconsider. We are only short about \$200,000,000 or \$250,000,000 not billions of dollars. I could be partisan and say: what is 36 millions? I believe that is more or less what Canadians said about changing the color of military uniforms; we do not need long consultations, everybody would agree to transferring that and 36 millions would be found easily.

During the campaign, I believe all leaders had promised to levy a minimum tax on people making \$50,000 or more, who pay no tax thanks to tax shelters. \$200 million could be netted and that would settle the matter.

I, for one, am convinced that if the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) wants to look into . . . I am convinced that the Minister of National Health and Social Welfare (Mr. Epp) would like that. But I believe that the Prime Minister should be sensitized to it because he will have to make the decisions. During the debate on universality who decided to flip-flop? The Prime Minister. I believe he alone can change that legislation. If he does not want to be remembered in future as the man of injustice, he will have to reflect on that, to reconsider his position and then he will certainly find those \$200 million.

The Canadian Government could have reduced its advertising budget by \$40 million. I think that every Canadian and every member of this House could examine the budget and make cuts . . . In my opinion, it is a humanitarian question. I could play politics and name the members who said: "What were the Liberals doing for older people when they were in power?" It is quite easy. If you want to know, you only have to refer to the blue book tabled by the Minister of National Health and Welfare on programs for children and senior citizens. Look at the series of dates and years and put names beside. You will eventually find a Tory measure.

I congratulate the present Minister of Indian Affairs (Mr. Crombie) who, with respect to the spouse allowance, did right a wrong even if a Liberal government was involved. But I admired that minister who was not like his colleague, unless this one changes his mind. Indeed, when the bill was before the