

Time Allocation

people within the Canadian economy, they now agree that what we need in Canada is to stimulate the economy. What we need in Canada is to provide more purchasing power, more consumer purchasing power, to stimulate Canadians' ability to purchase while at the same time improving their sense of optimism about the future of the country.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that to cut the incomes of those who are in receipt of the lowest incomes in the land, to cut the incomes of those who served this country hard and well and long for their entire life, to use them as the scapegoat, so to speak, for the inadequacy of past Government performance, is just unacceptable to the vast majority of Canadians today.

We have to realize who it is we are speaking about. We are speaking about people who came through the Depression and who, for the most part, were unable to garner any savings in their lifetime, who generally speaking worked at a time when pension plans were somewhat less generous than they may be today, for some who worked at a time when there was not the opportunity to get into an RRSP fund, if they had the money, and salt away a little bit, tax-free, for the future. We are talking about people on whose backs and as a result of whose work this country was built.

We give them little enough in return for their contribution over the years. The amount that they receive now from the Old Age Security program that we have in place is woefully inadequate when measured against the cost of surviving in this dog-eat-dog atmosphere that has been created by successive Liberal and Tory administrations, federal and provincial, over many, many years. To contemplate reducing even that income is to do them a grave disservice but, more importantly, it will undoubtedly work a serious hardship on many of them.

The action that the Government took last year in August, followed up by its proposals for reductions in the cost of living adjustment on old age pensions, Family Allowances and superannuation for retired civil servants has had such an onerous effect on the vast majority of those who would have been in receipt of it. How do you say to someone whose income is \$300 or thereabouts that they are not able to receive an increase commensurate with the increase in the cost of living, that they will simply have to absorb any shortfall? How do you say that to people in that category when you know full well that their municipal taxes will rise, that that will reflect itself in their property tax if they own a home or in their rent if they happen to live in an apartment? How do we say that when we know full well that the cost of heating oil and natural gas will rise, and those people, whether they have to share that cost with others in rental accommodation or pay it themselves if they own a home, will not be able to recover an equal amount from their cost of living adjustment? How do you tell those people that the inadequate amounts that they had previously will be even less adequate after we pass this legislation?

• (1530)

What worries me about the Government's move to restrict debate is that I am convinced that if the Government would open up its mind, its ears, and listen, and if it would analyze more carefully both the benefit to the Government's tax

coffers from the saving, and the cost to be borne by the senior citizens who will be affected, it would come to the conclusion, as I have, that with the changing economic conditions, to put in place this kind of legislation now is unjustifiable. To suggest for a moment that we ought to pass it post haste in order that we can somehow or other impose it immediately without debate, is to deny that the conditions and the minds of the people in this country have changed.

I do not want to harp on the position put forward by the Bishops, but it is worthy of note that the Bishops, representing significantly large numbers of Canadians, have said that we have to pay more attention to the inadequacies of our social service system. I suggest this would be a good place to start. The presidents of the major banks have said that the direction being followed by the Government of trying to squeeze the economy back into shape is no longer an appropriate direction to follow, that we have to move toward a more stimulative direction in order to generate economic activity, and in that way improve the economy of the country as a whole, the job opportunities, the tax flow to the Government, and the Government's ability to meet its commitments. When you take a look at the two groups of individuals as far apart in their responsibilities as the Bishops, on the one hand, and the presidents of the banks, on the other, and you find them coming to virtually the same conclusions about the direction in which we should be going, and you compare that with the direction followed by the Government, you find that the Government is going in exactly the opposite direction from the recommendations made by both of these bodies. You cannot help then but feel there is something wrong with the way the Government is pursuing its policies, there is something wrong with the methods it is using in developing its policies, and something drastically wrong with the Government's understanding of what is happening in this country as it is affecting the majority of Canadians.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, as I started, I end; this is no way to deal with the people who built the country. We can afford to give them adjustments in their incomes commensurate with the cost of living, and we ought not to tolerate interference of the type the Government is bringing about, both in the pension programs and in the processes of Parliament in dealing with them.

Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, I find it utterly incomprehensible that we are once again going through this rather ridiculous procedure of establishing a time at which this House can come to a decision on a Government measure. I listened to the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald). She did not talk to the motion. She talked to the Bill. The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) did the same thing. In the case of the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands, I must admit I was not surprised, but I was somewhat disappointed in the case of the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain because he is a Member of the Committee which is looking at the regulations of this House. I feel I will be speaking precisely to the motion which