

• (5:20 p.m.)

As I have said, it is easy to bring forward figures to show that an increase has taken place. This is true. It is also true that most pensions have in them an adjustment clause providing for a 2 per cent increase each year to cover the rise in the cost of living. But as has already been stated, the cost of living has risen over 4 per cent each year for the past two years, and there is no indication that this trend will not continue.

So what are we going to do about this problem? If we sit down for a minute, relax and think about it and what is happening to some people in this country, we must come to the conclusion that we should be doing something about it. For a number of years now it has been the same story; the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer. I include the many pensioners in that statement. This fact applies not only to pensioners but to many honest, sincere and hard-working citizens. It includes many people in the low income groups who because of the rising cost of living are getting poorer every year. The cost of living rises faster than incomes.

I am not an economist and am not experienced in this field, but you do not need too much intelligence and experience to know that when your cheque is increased by \$1 and it costs you \$4 more to live there is a gap and you are being gypped somewhere. This is what is happening to our pensioners; this is what is happening to many of our good, sincere and hard-working citizens. We can stop it. Let us stop fooling ourselves in this regard. Let us stop this inflation. We can do it if we really want to, if enough people are concerned about it and want to do something to correct the situation.

We can all stand up and say that we want to do something about it, but it is not enough simply to stand up and tell those who elected us that we want to do something about it, if we do not do so. We can convince the government; there are enough members here to do that. So let us stop the rising cost of living, since it appears that we are unable to do anything about increasing the incomes of our low wage earners and pensioners. Let us stop this business of fooling people with their income cheques. Let us stop fooling the pensioners, the poor and low income groups.

Everybody talks about disparity. This word has been used many times in the past couple of years. Disparity was the main topic of the

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last election campaign. But I ask: Do we really mean it? Are we really sincere? Many people do not know what is going on. Why do those who govern this country not take a sabbatical leave and visit some parts of the country to see for themselves the difference in the standard of living. That there is disparity is a fact. We must do something about it. It is not good enough simply to talk about it. I am not talking only of the Atlantic area because there are some sections of northern Ontario, the northern parts of the prairie provinces and other parts of the country where disparity exists. So let us do something about it. Let us also do something to improve the situation of our pensioners because there is disparity in this field.

The fact is that disparity exists simply because the cost of living is relatively the same across the country. There is not too much difference across the country in the price of a can of beans or the price of meat or vegetables. But incomes are much lower in some parts of the country than others. We must do something at all levels of government to improve the situation. We must do something about our pensioners who, although they may receive increases in their pensions, find that the cost of living is rising much faster than their incomes.

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley):

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments in this debate regarding the pension program. I would like the house to consider that our pensioners are for the most part those older people who were the pioneers of this country. These are the people who in many cases have lived through two world wars, and some of them fought in both. These are the people who went through one of the greatest depressions this country has known. These are the people who have raised children, many of whom are now contributing a great deal to the economy and well-being of our country. Now, in the twilight years of their lives, in a period when they are no longer able to make any money, no longer able to keep up with the rising cost of living, no longer able to move into the affluent age, we as a society are either rejecting them or not giving them adequate consideration.

This country was built initially by the efforts of these people. It might be true to say that the contribution they made in the form of money was not as adequate as the contributions made in the machine age in which we live. But I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that these people supplied much of the capital base