

state that the recommendation of our task force was to have tax assistance at a significantly lower amount than that which was reflected in the February Budget. To be fair, it was also stated that if we implemented the recommendation of my own task force, we would be affecting not just upper income level Canadians; we would be hitting very hard as well at the average International Nickel Company worker.

Therefore, we did in effect what the Minister of Finance did in his February Budget. We accepted the principle of lifetime tax assistance. At the same time, we maintained the levels as they are at the present time under the present legislation, which is up to \$60,000 of pension per year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Resuming debate, the Hon. Member for Kootenay West.

• (1720)

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have an opportunity to participate in the Opposition motion that is before us today. Let me begin by quoting the motion:

That this House profoundly regrets the two-year delay of the Government in bringing in promised legislation to improve Guaranteed Income Supplements for low income single elderly Canadians, and condemns the Government for its failure to respond to the innovative proposals of the all-party Parliamentary Task Force on Pension Reform to expand opportunities for Canadians under age 65 to make adequate provision for income in their retirement years.

When I first heard the motion that was placed before the House, I remembered a time before my adult active involvement in the labour movement or the political process in this country in 1947 to 1949 when the United Autoworkers in the United States and later in Canada began their campaign for a pension plan in the auto industry. Since then much progress has been made with respect to industrially negotiated pension plans and public pension plans on both sides of the border, particularly on the Canadian side of the border. At that time there was a short song "too old to work and too young to die" which became a symbol for the people at that time. That expression is still singularly appropriate to the conditions in which many of our citizens, particularly those who work in heavy industry, still find themselves. The song, which was sung by Joe Glazer, the educational director of the United Rubber Workers at that time, who often travelled among various groups of workers in industry, is as follows:

They put horses to pasture, they feed them on hay,
Even machines get retired some day.
The bosses get pensions when their days are through,
Fat pensions for them, brother, nothing for you.
... Who will take care of you,
How'll you get by
When you're too old to work and too young to die?

Those who have not worked as life-termers in heavy industry may think that that day has passed. However, anyone who is familiar with the mining and smelting industry knows that the number of people who take early retirement in that industry due to union negotiated pension plans often die before the age of 58 or 60, or very soon after they go on pensions. This is largely due to health hazards that still exist not only in the mining and smelting industry but the chemical and other

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industries as well. Furthermore, it is the hazards from those industries that affect the surrounding communities. These hazards exist partly because we have not conducted the necessary industrial clean-up, both in and out of those installations, that should have been carried out.

Hopefully the Government and the Official Opposition are seriously considering reducing the retirement age to 60. Certainly the NDP has discussed and advocated this step for a long time. But at a time when we are all collectively considering reducing the retirement age to 60, we should seriously consider the fact that there are thousands of Canadians who retire at age 58 or 60 but who do not live long enough to collect pensions for more than a few months. It is still a serious situation and one to which this song still applies. They may still ask how we will get by when we are too old to work and too young to die.

I listened to the Hon. Member for Sudbury (Mr. Frith) a moment ago. I believe he said that the Government would soon introduce legislation to provide for the increase in the guaranteed income supplement. The word he used was "shortly". I trust that he will forgive those of us in this Party for not exactly being excited by the use of his word "shortly". We saw an example of this in Question Period today in reference to the former Minister of Labour who stated on June 1, 1981, that an even then long awaited and still awaited important piece of legislation affecting life and death in the work place would be introduced "in the near future". I do not know how the word "shortly" relates to the words "in the near future", but I think the Hon. Member would forgive us for being suspicious and preferring to have the legislation in hand before showing great excitement. However, the statement is welcomed and I hope it will be followed through.

Canada must have the most studies conducted of any country on earth. With respect to the question of pensions, there has been a task force, a couple of Throne Speeches as well as a Budget. That Budget mentions studies which followed the studies of the task force, which in turn followed previous studies which have lasted for years. We have seen green papers, and I suppose there will be white papers. Perhaps there will be a whole rainbow of papers before we begin to seriously accomplish even some of the extremely limited recommendations made by the recent task force on pension reform.

The last Budget had a section entitled "Building Pensions for Canadians". Stage one is to be implemented on January 1, 1985. They are rather limited recommendations. Stage two is to commence on January 1, 1988. This will take place in three or four years, and in the words of the former Minister of Labour, I suppose that is in the near future. However, it still puts off to a future time any meaningful suggestions in the Budget. For instance, there is "the annual dollar ceiling on deductible contributions to all types of pension plans which rises to \$15,500. Second, "the carry-forward provision for deduction entitlements for both money purchase and defined benefit plans comes into force. Entitlements from 1985 onward can be claimed". Third, "the two types of plan are integrated into one comprehensive system of tax assistance limits".