hands, and they need not shove the responsibility off on to the executive and say that the executive has to do the job. If these members stand up and insist upon a change being made, a change will come about. I urge them to take that step this afternoon.

I should like to go back a couple of years to show the house what has been happening to the cheques received by old age pensioners. The 2 per cent increase given those in receipt of the old age pension amounted to $1.50 a month. In the government publication that I hold in my hand the statement is made that last year the average cost of living in this nation increased by 4.1 per cent. I do not know what that means to hon. members opposite, but let me tell them what it means to the old age pensioner. It means that his standard of living and his spending power has decreased by more than $1.50 every month. It has been cut by that amount.

The year before, 1967, saw an average increase in the cost of living over the length and breadth of this nation of 4 per cent. Again the old age pensioners had a reduction that year in their basic pension of $1.50. True, we have increased their pensions by 2 per cent each year, but over this two year period there has been an 8.1 increase in the over-all cost of living.

This is what we are asking the government to correct; indeed it is just one of the inequities that exist. Old age pension organizations all across the country are asking that the standard of living of these pensioners should at least not be eroded. We have the voting power in this house to correct the situation, and we plead with the government and with Liberal members to help us correct this injustice.

Members of parliament are pretty well paid by other standards, but do they know what it means to an old age pensioner to have the equivalent of $1.50 knocked off his pension cheque? It means disaster. In this regard I should like to refer to a letter I have received and which I am prepared to table, Mr. Speaker, if the house desires. It is the sort of letter that all members receive and is written by a chap in receipt of a pension. He receives a small pension in addition to the old age pension plus a small portion of the supplement. Every time his pension is increased $2 or $3 the supplement is reduced by a like amount, and he is no better off now than he was several years ago. In fact, he is worse off because the increase that has taken place in the cost of living has gradually eroded his standard of living.

What worries the pensioners are these small increases, certainly small by our standards. According to this pensioner's letter his milk bill has gone up 24 cents a month—I agree not very much. His bread bill has gone up 16 cents a month, his daily newspaper has gone up 40 cents a month and his rent has risen $10 a month. Yet he receives the same pension. Therefore, do hon. members wonder that these people have cause to come to members of parliament and demand that something be done?

We have also received correspondence from senior citizens groups. The other day I received some correspondence from the senior citizens group in Trail which is in my riding of Kootenay West. This group is asking that the 2 per cent figure be increased because of the factors I have just outlined. It is also asking for higher income tax exemptions. In all common sense, can anybody justify the taxation of people in dire need who have no or extremely low incomes? I suggest that this just does not make sense.

If the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) were in the house I know he would say that we cannot afford to lose the taxes collected from those in the lower income brackets. But we in this party say that there are other sources of taxation, and Mr. Carter, in his proposals for a just taxation system for Canada, has shown the government where it can raise the money to increase pensions while at the same time raising the income tax exemptions. The income tax exemptions of $1,000 for a single man and $2,000 for a married man were instituted donkeys years ago and bear no relevance to the earning power of today. They should be revised, and it is this government that should revise them. This is another way of providing some relief to pensioners and others on extremely low incomes. Again I suggest that the government take a good look at the Carter commission report and ascertain how the incomes of those in the low salary or wages brackets can be supplemented without harm to anybody.

I see that time is drifting along and I have several other matters I should like to raise in connection with this very interesting problem. In Canada today there are over 1,500,000 men and women receiving old age security pensions. I do not have the exact figure but it is somewhere over the one and a half million mark. About 780,000 of these receive part or all of the guaranteed income supplement. Currently, the income supplement with the 2