

Where is this money going? It is not just going to the people who are 21 years of age and under. It is not just going to the people who are 35 years of age and under. For example, some of it is going to the senior citizens in the province of Ontario who as of January 1, 1972, just 60 days ago, do not have to pay one nickel for hospitalization or medical services.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hales: That is if a man doesn't make over \$2,500.

Mr. Whicher: If he is getting \$135 a month he is not making \$3,500, and he does not pay one nickel. I will tell you who promised that to them: it was the Tory party of the province of Ontario. There are many things we could discuss tonight, Mr. Speaker. I could emphasize once more that not enough has been done for our senior citizens. We all know that. We all want to do more for our fathers and mothers. In that respect we agree with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who if he had lived at the time of our Lord would have been the thirteenth disciple because he wants to give everything away. But you cannot give everything away. You have got to speak about reality. You have to remember that our sons and daughters are the people who have to pay the taxes. You have to remember that our sons and daughters want to give us much as they can, but there comes a time when they can only give so much and the people in Canada who work hard become tired of paying taxes.

I haven't the slightest doubt that when the next budget comes down every opposition member, including the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, will stand up and say that the government is charging the people of Canada too much in taxes.

An hon. Member: Pitiful!

Mr. Whicher: Somebody to my left says "Pitiful," but it is not pitiful for the senior citizens of Canada who have the highest old age pensions of any country in the world. I agree it is not enough but it is the highest anywhere.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: I want to close by comparing the old age pension system here with the system in the United States of America, the wealthiest country in the world. For comparison I will take someone who lives in the great city of Detroit, a city of two or three million people, and someone who lives in a smaller but still great city, the city of Windsor in Canada. What happens to a man in Detroit who reaches the age of 65, who has no money and does not come under the American social security plan? I remind hon. members that 5 per cent of all Americans do not come under that plan. He goes on relief from the city of Detroit and from the state of Michigan. But a man aged 65 who has a wife and who lives in Windsor faces a different prospect. As of today he draws \$255 a month and next month he will draw \$260. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that we should be proud of that accomplishment.

Pension Increases

• (2130)

Anyone can criticize. Anyone can say "too little, too late". This afternoon I heard my hon. friend say, "I did not vote for the wage increase of Members of Parliament." Of course, he has the right to say that. But I ask you, Mr. Speaker, how did his party vote on that issue, and why was he not here to vote—

An hon. Member: That was not the question.

Mr. Whicher: If we are going to talk politics, let's put all the cards on the table.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: I want to see the joker, and I saw one this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): No.

Mr. Gleave: Would the hon. member permit a question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): There is not unanimous consent. The hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta).

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, it looks as though I have the honour of ending the debate tonight. Coming in after a rousing, arm-waving speech such as was just delivered by the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher), I am inclined to wonder what there is left to say. He seemed to paint a picture of a Utopia that does exist, so we need not do anything about it.

An hon. Member: He was factual.

Mr. Murta: I for one do not believe this to be true. I believe that the hon. member for Bruce may have overstated his case. I think that one of the greatest injustices that has occurred in the so-called just society that we have heard so much about since 1968 is that our old age pensioners have been treated so callously by this government. I think this is a fact that virtually everybody in the House realizes. The beating that inflation has dealt to retired people living on pensions is causing monumental problems to say the least. If any group of citizens ever had good reason to complain, I sincerely believe it is our senior citizens. Not only has our entire population seen their dollar shrink with inflation, but they have seen the standard of living of employed people going up. This is due not only to increased wages but to improved pension benefits for employees.

Mr. Speaker, an employee who retired in 1956 has suffered a 30 per cent loss in the purchasing power of his pension dollar while his younger counterpart has received a 35 per cent increase in the same period. In the various levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal, pensions for retired civil servants have increased by as much as 40 per cent to replace the loss in purchasing power. This makes it difficult for the federal government, at whose doorstep the responsibility for inflation is ulti-