

*The Budget—Mr. Sulatycky*

expenses; they are throwing money around just like it was going out of style. All sorts of testimony has been presented before various committees of this House, and also outside, of the extravagance of that organization but nothing has ever been done about it.

• (9:20 p.m.)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

**Some hon. Members:** Carry on.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard):** Is there unanimous consent that the hon. member continue?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the courtesy of the House, but I know there are other members who wish to speak. I have virtually completed my remarks, in any event.

**Mr. Allen B. Sulatycky (Rocky Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to take very long but I should like to go back to the earlier stages of this long drawn-out budget debate. Several weeks ago when the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) presented his budget, he came in for a great deal of criticism. The budget was criticized because it made no provision for the old age pensioners, and it is with this aspect that I wish to deal.

It seems that in the last few days of the budget debate speakers have strayed from the direction in which the debate started. As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, a couple of amendments centered on the absence of measures for the relief of people on fixed incomes and, in particular, the senior citizens of this country. Some members from the opposite side of the House said they deplored this failure, and others spoke of their disappointment in it. I am sure there are not very many who deplore it or are disappointed, because most members realize the financial limitations under which governments must work.

We all agree, I am sure, that we are in favour of dramatically increased pensions for senior citizens, and in the next few minutes I hope to deal with how we may achieve this. Just after the Minister of Finance made his budget speech I visited the Old Timers' Club at Turner Valley, Alberta. Naturally, the people there were concerned about the level of the old age pension and the fact that so many of them find it more difficult to get by

today than when they first retired, even though their pensions are now somewhat higher. A number of them asked me how the government is ever going to be able to pay back those people who bought government bonds. I was pleased to be able to tell them that as a result of this budget and the government's efforts in the last year there have been two successive surpluses. This means that money will be available for the payment of the debt which governments have been incurring for the last 13 or 15 years through deficit budgets.

I, like most hon. members, am aware of and concerned about the plight of many individuals and families who rely in whole or in large measure on the old age pension and the guaranteed income supplement for their source of income. It is amazing how so many people are able to exist on such an inadequate sum. All of us who are members of this House receive letters from these fine citizens outlining the various situations in which they find themselves. I recently received one such letter from a gentleman in Bellevue, Alberta. He stated in part:

It is not so difficult when two people are both receiving old age benefits, but like myself it is quite difficult. My spouse, who is much younger than myself, does not receive the old age pension. I also have a daughter attending high school. We are all supporting ourselves on this. Hard to believe? We pay our gas bills amounting to \$10 per month, light bills amounting to \$5, medicine which is from \$5 to \$10 a month, constant home repair expenses, and many others. In the end, we do not have much left for the high standard cost of living, as you can well see.

—We old age pensioners, who have built the Canadian economy should have a right to a little free care, but as you can see we are at the bottom of the pile.

People such as this deserve to be admired. But while we admire them we should not be content with leaving them at the bottom of the pile. The fact that they do get by is not reason enough for not increasing assistance to them. They manage to maintain themselves only by making sacrifices which the rest of us would not be prepared to make. Of all the groups in our society, one of the most researched is the aged, as we classify the group to which those over 65 years of age belong. Many studies and many papers have been written about the problems of this group, not only in this country but in the United States and other nations of the world. Almost without fail, the studies conclude that the single, most serious problem facing individuals over 65 is the financial one. A