

Supply

four weeks ago on behalf of over 100,000 pensioners and many affiliated groups, including the Old Age Pensioners of B.C. which has 47 branches and the Senior Citizens Organization of B.C. which has 43 branches. They say it is quite unfair what the Budget has done, that COSCO and affiliates with over 100,000 members protest the loss of indexing on the universal old age pension, something that should be protected at all costs. They go on to ask the Government and the Prime Minister to reconsider their move.

The 3 per cent deindexation of old age pensions we know has a cumulative effect which is particularly significant when you really look at it. The loss of \$100 will be hard on people when that reduction is instituted next year. Over the course of five or six years, as many Members have said, seniors will lose \$2,284 and added to that is the extra loss in spending power because of taxes. It is really a pretty tragic situation. It is very symbolic. People are saying right across the country, not just those who support our Party but those who supported the Conservative Party in all faith in the election, that "We cannot trust this Government anymore. We have lost faith. The Prime Minister and Ministers make promises and then change their promises." The Budget itself is dishonest. There is no question about it, Mr. Speaker.

The 3 per cent deindexation in the Budget has become a symbol of hypocrisy and unfairness and also of the Conservative Party and its Government.

As NDP Members know, we launched a petition campaign. We have already submitted well over 10,000 signatures. I know there have been at least 2,000 from my riding. I want to tell the Minister who is laughing that this is only the start of it. He will see many many more. I wish the Minister would take this matter much more seriously since his Members have said he is supposedly an advocate for seniors—

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Yes, I am.

Ms. Mitchell:—rather than making them victims of his policies.

Pensioners groups are very concerned. They are holding meetings. The Government will continue to hear from them. I hope also that the pensioners, and I am sure they will as they get on with this campaign, will not forget their grandchildren. They will be suffering the same deindexation, a 3 per cent reduction in family allowances. Of course it is not as much money, but it is the same kind of nasty social policy which is typical of this Government.

● (1740)

I should like to mention particularly a meeting which was held in Toronto the other day. I flew there to attend it. It was called by 11 major organizations in Ontario, as well as national organizations, representing over one million pensioners across the country. I would like to read into the record the names of the groups represented at that time: United Senior Citizens of Ontario, representing 300,000 seniors; National Pensioners & Senior Citizens Federation, representing 400,000 seniors; Canadian Pensioners Concerned, representing 50,000

seniors; Metro Seniors Council, representing 700 senior clubs and many more members; Canadian Council of Retirees, representing 45,000 seniors; Older Adult Centres Association of Ontario, representing 80,000 seniors; Ontario Association of Residents Councils, representing 20,000 seniors; Third Age Learning Age, representing 900 seniors; Network for Home Support Services of Metro Toronto, representing 40 senior home support agencies; Association of Jewish Seniors, representing 6,000 seniors; and the Toronto Mayors Committee on Aging.

If the Minister has not read this joint statement, I wish he would at least read the statement in which I summarized some of their points. As I said, they represent one million senior citizens. There was complete consensus on the part of those people and they were of all political stripes. There was no question that they were absolutely fed up with the Government. Some of them were even advocating that seniors who voted Tory and joined the Party should cut up their membership cards and send them in.

I hope the Minister will listen to their points. One of the first points they raised, the one on which they commented with the greatest degree of feeling, was that after the Government talked so much about consultation, there was no formal consultation with organizations representing senior citizens. They were assured in the blue report that there would not be changes and therefore there was no need for them to appear as witnesses before the Standing committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. The Government went ahead and really betrayed them. At the meeting they were asked by a reporter: "Do you feel betrayed?" As one voice, everyone at the meeting said: "Absolutely".

They also referred to the fact that the Prime Minister, in his pursuit of office, when he was out to get votes, pledged on behalf of his Party that a Progressive Conservative Government would index Old Age Security pensions to the actual cost of living.

An Hon. Member: A betrayal.

Ms. Mitchell: Certainly that was a betrayal; there is no question about that. They have done just the opposite, and I think the Liberals did the same thing when they imposed the six and five program. I am glad to hear that they have changed their position.

Mr. Nunziata: We are in this together.

Ms. Mitchell: There should be no reduction of indexing for senior citizens or for families. The Conservatives also demanded that seniors make a significant sacrifice to help reduce the deficit.

Mr. Nunziata: Let's fight together.

Ms. Mitchell: I am quoting senior constituents from Ontario, including senior citizens in the riding of the Hon. Member, as well as those represented by national groups, if the Hon. Member is interested.