

Adjournment Debate

There are a number of things the Minister would like to see done. First, what we now find is that the current warning on each package of cigarettes is weak hearted. The bland wording of that warning should be replaced by a series of rotating warnings that would be striking and decisive, in the fashion: "Tobacco causes Cancer." Those kinds of warnings are already in place in the United States, the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries.

Second, the Minister wants a restriction on lifestyle advertising. Advertisements and promotions linking smoking to health, sports and an exciting, attractive lifestyle are totally misleading. We are extremely concerned with the impact of that kind of publicity, especially on young people.

Third, the Minister wants limits to be set for the amount of money tobacco companies may invest in advertising.

Four, the Minister is currently considering a ban on private publicity and the use of sports people in sports events sponsored by tobacco companies.

The Government also wants a smokeless Canada by the year 2000, and we are striving to take that direction.

● (1835)

SOCIAL SECURITY—BENEFITS FOR WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS AGED 60 TO 64 YEARS—EXCLUSION OF SINGLE, DIVORCED AND SEPARATED PERSONS.

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the opening of the Salon des aînés took place in Montreal. Most senior citizens who were present asked me what the Conservative Government, the Mulroney Government, had against senior citizens. Those people made me aware of the fact that over a period of 20 months, the Government passed five pieces of legislation which were detrimental to senior citizens.

First of all, they made some discrimination over the spouse allowance. The Government deliberately decided to deny 80,000 persons aged between 60 and 64 years the right to be eligible to one of the old age pensions programs, the spouse allowance, in order to save \$300 million. At the same time, this Government decided to spend \$1 billion to help people who deposited \$60,000 or more in banks.

● (1840)

The second negative decision, the House will recall, was in May, when the Government decided on a 3 per cent cut in the indexation of Old Age Security pensions. We all remember Mrs. Denis on Parliament Hill, and the senior citizens who had to drop their card games at their senior citizens' clubs, pick up their signs and come and defend their rights.

Third, in January the Government decided to cut unemployment insurance benefits for 34,000 early retirees in Canada who had been obliged to take early retirement, to leave their jobs and give somebody younger a chance or simply because their plants were being shut down. There again, the Government cut the benefits of 34,000 early retirees in Canada, which works out to 13,000 in Quebec, just to save \$30 million, while

the same Government spent \$50 million to change the colour of military uniforms.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, this year, for the first time, that same Conservative Government turned down all home maintenance projects under the Canada Works and Job Development Programs. These projects were used across the country to do small repair jobs and spring cleaning at the homes of senior citizens who were in need. There again, it was the Government's decision.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, and I heard about this Monday, and I think this will be news to everyone, that same Government, ignoring the promise it made in Sherbrooke to leave the indexation of Old Age Security pensions alone, to maintain the New Horizons program, to grant subsidies and to consult senior citizens, that same Government has decided to cut \$3,721,000 from the New Horizons program, a cut of 27 per cent. In Quebec, this works out to a cut of nearly \$906,000, that is, 27 per cent less for the New Horizons program.

Mr. Speaker, I wish the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister, whom I have to call the Minister of Social Injustice, would tell us why the Government is picking on senior citizens. What have these people done to get such a raw deal from this Government?

In 20 months, Mr. Speaker, we have seen five negative measures against senior citizens. These are people who helped to build our country. What have they done to deserve this? What young people have today they owe to them. Why is this Government, why is the Prime Minister so hard on these people who are in need? In fact, the vast majority have incomes which put them right on the poverty line. I wish the Parliamentary Secretary would explain why, in the last Budget, the Government decided against extending the spouse's allowance and also why, without telling a soul, it made cuts in the New Horizons program.

Mrs. Gabrielle Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, for the nth time, we are having a debate about the spouses allowance, and naturally, this issue was raised by none other than the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart). Some could see in his attitude a kind of blind obstinacy since he continues to question not a negative, but in fact a positive action since we are dealing with an improvement to the spouses allowance program. As for me, I think that it is more than time to give a realistic description of the situation.

First of all, the public should know that there is no disagreement in principle as far as the spouses allowance is concerned.

Indeed, whether we sit on the side of the Government or that of the Opposition, we all agree on the need for more social justice. Whatever our party, it is obvious for all of us that the ideal structure of a society which would meet our aspirations would be one that would help all needy people, and I did say all of them. However, the fact is that, in practice, this ideal