

sive Liberal Governments. There was absolutely no control over anything in any Department. Liberal Members certainly have a lot of nerve to be able to complain about anything at all.

I simply wanted to put those points on the record to explain why we cannot phase in the pensions for these widows faster. However, we have made an excellent start. If we were not faced with that heavy debt load, there would certainly be a lot more money for pensioners, veterans and the like. I simply wanted to put those points on the record.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Questions or comments? Resuming debate.

**Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate. I was intrigued by the line of reasoning developed for our benefit by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie). If his logic were really so stringent and correct, then he and his own Party, for the sake of reducing the deficit and for the sake of increasing payments under the old age security Bill that is before us today, would have refrained from making promises during the election that amounted to the expenditure of billions of dollars. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine must make up his mind. He blames the Liberals for the deficit which he said does not enable the Government to make more generous and broader payments, but he announced promises during the last election campaign which would have increased the deficit. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot condemn and at the same time make extravagant promises and still be on the right track. That does not hold water.

● (1440)

I also regret that he engaged in a character assassination of the Leader of the Liberal Party, who is not present, by harping on what happened 12 years ago. I suppose he was referring to the period between 1972 and 1974. In the 1974 election, the people of Canada must have seen something positive in the then Minister of Finance, otherwise they would not have re-elected the Liberal Party with a majority. Canadians supported what was done in those years.

Although the Hon. Member has been in the House for a number of years, he does not seem to be aware of the fact that there is a reason for having deficits. That is the role of the Government in difficult economic times. When a country goes through a recession the Government must have a deficit situation if it wants to help those who are hard hit by the recession. That can be done in a variety of ways. In 1982-83 the Party of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine insisted that the Government was not doing enough to alleviate unemployment and that it was not doing enough to meet the needs of the industrial communities in Quebec, Windsor and the Hon. Member's home town. That was exactly what the Liberal Government was trying to do. However, if the revenues are not coming in in order to do that, a deficit must be incurred. The deficit provided social shock absorbers and measures which allowed Canadian families to maintain an

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income in order to survive through the very difficult times and to put money back into the economy.

I am pleased the Government has taken this step. It would be very difficult to say something novel about what this Bill does not contain, but nevertheless there must be some input from those who participate in the debate to lay the foundation, or pave the ground, for the next Bill—which I hope will be introduced shortly—which will take into account the pension reform committee recommendations. That is what the debate is all about. A debate provides Members with an opportunity to express ideas on all sides of the House.

What strikes us on this side of the House is that, while the Bill would provide a benefit to people who are not covered and who would definitely welcome the measure, it leaves out those people whose marital status is not recognized in this measure. In other words, the measure seems to be guided by the marital status of the person rather than by the principle of helping those who are between the ages of 60 and 65 living below the poverty line. That is the principle which we ought to adopt in this and future Bills.

The people who find themselves in difficult economic circumstances are being left out of the legislation. There are a number of men and women who worked for many years in physical but low-paying jobs. Those people reached the point where they could no longer do physical work and were unable to find work because of a lack of formal training in other types of occupations. Those people did not have the opportunity nor the capacity to save money for early retirement. They are a special group of people.

I am sure Hon. Members opposite will agree that this Bill discriminates against those who choose to remain single. Of course, that discrimination may not have a legal substance, but certainly it is something which the Government should consider.

I would like to refer to a letter which was recently received by the Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) from an organization in London, Ontario, which is called *Womanspirit*. The letter reads:

Being aware of the discrimination against a great majority of people, especially women, of the Canadian Government's proposed spouse's allowance, we strongly support an appeal to the Government to extend the program to all single people in need between the ages of 60 and 64. This extension of the program will definitely be beneficial to Canadians in this age bracket who are single, separated or divorced.

*Womanspirit* joins other concerned groups and individuals in support of the proposed extension of the spouse's allowance program.

We would be glad to hear of any progress made in this appeal.

As I previously stated, the principle that guides this legislation is attached to marital status and not to the poverty line. It is an important concept on which the Government, in its term of office, will have to focus because that is the element of fairness and the principle to which the majority of Canadians would adhere. It is also the principle which has guided preceding Governments in introducing progressive steps in pension legislation, as previously stated by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine.