

by this increase, that prices go on increasing and that the purchasing power diminishes even more.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the government to open their eyes and to consider the proposed solutions. If they do not find better solutions, they can always examine those which have been proposed and try to implement them.

We are pleased with the increase but, at the same time, we deplore the fact that this will not solve the problem. There is no possible solution on that side. When pensions are increased and services improved, it is also necessary, in order to balance the economy, to find a logical, technical and philosophical means of preventing an increase in the cost of living. Yet, former governments have never thought of it. They have never stopped to consider the problem, to study that philosophical and technical economy which would solve the problem once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is like a giant motor without a throttle-value: it runs either too fast or too slow. Here is the solution we propose: let us fix a throttle-value on that economic motor which is very good, very powerful and has everything it takes. But our system has no controls. We suggest that the big economic motor be equipped with a regulator to maintain some price stability.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to repeat what has already been said, as I do not want to hold up the business of the house. We are very anxious, like all hon. members, to see passage of that pension increase. We are anxious, like all other hon. members, to see our senior citizens receive that increase.

• (1520)

[English]

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on Bill C-207. I will not be long, so as to enable other hon. members to speak today if they so desire.

There are a couple of points missing from the bill which are an oversight of the minister, either foreseen or deliberate. One relates to a problem with which I am sure we are all familiar; it exists among aged couples pretty well universally. Because the habit in this country is for men to marry women younger than themselves, it follows that married men reach pensionable age sooner than their wives. It is also a fact of Canadian life that most women in their later years do not earn any income because traditionally their work is confined to taking care of the household, this so far being a non-paying position, speaking in general terms.

My first suggestion for improving this legislation is to ask the government to consider seriously extending the pension to the wife as well as to the husband as soon as the husband becomes pensionable age. I have numerous acquaintances in my constituency, men who are aged 65—most of them agricultural workers, of course, my constituency being an agricultural one—and are retiring, with no other source of income. They have to support themselves and their wives on one pension. As I am sure even the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin), who is here today, will admit, the pension being paid one person is not even sufficient to make adequate provision for his needs, and when he is also obligated to

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provide for his wife the situation becomes very difficult. Indeed, in view of the cost of rent, food and clothing the situation becomes impossible.

In some cases a man who qualifies for pension is forced to continue working until his wife reaches pensionable age, in which case he loses his guaranteed income supplement; or the wife is forced to go out to work until she receives a pension. Because many wives are not accustomed to going out to work, an extremely large burden is placed on the household until the wife reaches pensionable age. Therefore I would ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) why he neglected to consider this aspect of the pension plan. I am sure he is aware of the problem I have described. It is possible that he may have considered but rejected the idea. If this is the case, I should like him to state why he has rejected it and how he expects two people to live on one pension, at least until the wife becomes pensionable age. If the minister does not expect them to do that, what else can they do? Is the wife supposed to apply for provincial welfare until she receives a pension, or should she go out to work to augment the family income?

The second point I wish to make relates to the agricultural policy of this government. The government's policy is designed to remove farmers from the land. As we know, a large number of agricultural workers in Canada are of middle age and are getting close to retirement age. Generally speaking, they are the ones most vulnerable to the difficult economic conditions our farmers are facing today. The people who are quitting the farms, through no choice of their own but because economic conditions are such that they can no longer earn a living on the farm, in most cases are in the 55 to 65 age bracket. Quite often they are unsuited to retraining and to relocating in order to take other jobs. In many cases their health is such that they cannot accept labouring work or work of an unskilled nature.

I suggest that in cases where farmers, as a result of economic conditions brought on by this government, are forced off the land, their pensionable age be lowered to 60 or 55. I do not think that is unreasonable. The contribution of these people to the building of this country, to the feeding of our people, and the amount of physical labour they have performed up to the time they are forced off the land, certainly warrants some kind of reward by way of an early pension which would allow them to retire from the land with some dignity and without the undue stress and strain involved in trying to become retrained for other types of employment.

• (1530)

Those are the two main points I wish the minister to consider. A wife should receive a pension as soon as her husband becomes pensionable. Second, in respect of farming people who have been forced off the land because of difficult economic conditions in agriculture, the age at which they become eligible for pension should be lowered from 65 to 60. I think this would serve a very useful purpose and the number of people involved, in relation to the whole, would not be very great.

Earlier today the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Mahoney) made some unkind remarks, as he usually does