

the Status of Women of Canada, the Federative Catholic Women's League or AFEAS that I mentioned earlier, the *Fédération des femmes du Québec*, if any women's association which has been promoting the interests of Canadian women had asked for an exemption for charitable donations under the Income Tax Act, most would have been turned down as were many other volunteer associations in Canada. In fact, their charter allows their members to engage in what might be called political activities under the Income Tax Act.

The Income Tax Act does not allow groups who want to obtain funds and enable people to deduct charitable donations from their income tax to engage in political activities. I therefore asked senior officials to update an interpretation of the act which I thought unfair, and I am very happy to be able to clarify this issue today. When the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) gets all heated up about this, she is getting angry for nothing. We are the first ones to want to update the interpretation of the act, even though this does not come directly under our jurisdiction, but rather under the judiciary when it comes to determining if a certain activity is political or not. I suggest—and I hope this will not make me the target of any criticism—that voluntary organizations which deal with the status of women or any other valid cause in the eyes of Canadian society should be allowed to engage in certain political activities.

This is what we all believe on this side of the House, and circular 78-3 which was published recently by the Department of National Revenue will be completely revised. I am happy to be able to inform the House that my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Guay), has made a commitment to revise the circular and to take our request into consideration. I do not know why the hon. member is laughing. Perhaps she does not understand. I shall try to explain this differently. Oh, I see that the Progressive Conservative party is pleased and supports the status of women! I am happy to see this since we are not used to such support. We want certain activities of a political nature which are acceptable to Canadian society—and the examples I mentioned should not of course be considered binding for the government—to be recognized as valid and legal.

Of course no case has been tested in the courts in 75 years, if my memory serves me right, which makes it difficult for the experts to determine what would be acceptable in the courts today. Writing letters and making representations to members of parliament is in my opinion a political activity which has become part of Canadian customs, can shock no one and is absolutely respectable and important for the health of a democracy. If I understand my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, the senior officials will see what is being done in Great Britain, among other countries, to determine the types of political activities which would not be acceptable and would go against the purpose of the legislation since, after all, it finances indirectly these organizations with the money of all

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Canadians, and which other types of activities are quite acceptable and give evidence of the health of the Canadian democracy. Mr. Speaker, that is all I have to say about the point raised by the hon. member and which has nothing to do with this debate.

● (1542)

[English]

The spouse's allowance program which is at the very core of this motion of non-confidence put forward by the opposition is a program that was brought into effect in October 1975. There are four programs that we know of which have been in existence for the past two and a half years and which we can observe, study and assess. Under the spouse's allowance program, allowances are paid to spouses between the ages of 60 and 64 inclusive. These allowances are for old age pensioners when the need is established by an income test. This income test is one of the most reasonable that I know of. It takes into account that a couple may have a small house, and no matter the value of that house, if it has some reasonable value it would not be deducted from the budgetary list of income and expenses on which they are assessed. This is to find out if the spouse, who in most cases is a woman, is eligible to receive that additional pension called spouse's allowance.

What is most important and what was totally lacking in the contribution made by the hon. member opposite is that the spouse's allowance—in all honesty this should have been mentioned by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald)—was introduced in the context of the guaranteed annual income which her own political party more than anything else has helped kill.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Miss Bégin:** If I understood the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) correctly, he used the most pornographic or criminal word one can use in this place concerning the guaranteed annual income, which has always been, no matter what name it is given, a commitment of this government. Many clichés, fears and fairy tales which are frightening instead of hopeful have been described by the hon. member for Athabasca. He is trying to make people believe that a guaranteed income would bring the economy of this country to the worst possible point. Many other members opposite have supported the hon. member in this approach.

● (1552)

I do not know where the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands was during that debate. I do not know what kind of a fight she had to put up in her caucus in order to obtain a formal commitment to any form of guaranteed income. I do not know where she was when the estimates of my department were being studied a few weeks ago by the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. I did not hear her speaking about older people, older women in particular. After a few very good reports were published by some outside groups, it suddenly became a fad to be talking about the issue.