

We have tried to do the same sort of thing with your young people through the Opportunities for Youth program and local initiatives programs. People who were trying to destroy the institutions of our society a few years ago now feel for the first time that society cares about them, is interested in them and that our institutions are relevant to them. I am not really too concerned about senior citizens coming to Ottawa to tear down the Parliament Buildings or to start bonfires at city hall. We are talking about an enriching program that is important to them in later years when often they feel shunted aside. Through these advisory groups they are given a channel of communication to their government. We are representing them and they no longer feel alienated. They do get their message through. There is an interplay and a connection between senior citizens and their governments, as there should be between all citizens. Let us not forget them. The New Horizons program offers that potential, and I hope the minister will take this as a suggestion and establish these advisory groups of senior citizens.

• (1450)

It was rather interesting to meet with senior citizens. They are a great bunch. We had a couple of meetings and they talked about some interesting programs they wanted to undertake, such as travelling to Niagara Falls, Quebec City, and some even wanted to go to Vancouver. I thought that was great. Those are things they should be able to do. I agree with the purpose of the program itself, and feel that perhaps we should help them organize. It also helps put their problems into perspective. They thought life had been pretty tough on them.

We had one meeting at the church and one at the town hall in Maple. They said that everyone there got there by car. This was true. I suggested that perhaps they should start thinking about this method of travelling to Niagara Falls, Quebec City and Vancouver. We have another section in Woodbridge which is made up of summer cottages in which a lot of the older people are now living. It is a big event for these people to get to downtown Toronto, and for some even to get to the post office in Woodridge. Perhaps there is no problem for some of these senior citizens in getting out, but for others it is a big event to even get out of their homes and down the street. They do not have cars.

These are the same people who are making the trade-offs that many senior citizens have to make today between nutrition and medicine. I spoke a couple of weeks ago in the House about this. These meetings had a strange effect on other senior citizens. They began to put their problems in some sort of perspective, and began to realize that they were not so badly off. They began to talk about doing something for other senior citizens who were in worse shape than they were, perhaps because of this trade-off between medication and food. These people would get together and make a deal with a few of the local druggists. They would actually get into the auction business and play one against the other, trying to find the one who would give them the best deal on drug costs. These people have become quite excited about this program.

This is the potential of the New Horizons program. This is the sort of thing it is doing, and this is the sort of thing to which these motions are intended to apply. It saddens

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me to think that a man such as the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), who has had such experience in this House, would stoop to this type of tactic.

No one can question the credentials of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in respect of his experience with senior citizens. I am sure he is as impatient as all of us, but I am sure that if we really think about this in all fairness and in an unbiased, non-political way, he and others will appreciate the record of the Liberal government as far as senior citizens are concerned.

When I heard I was to speak this afternoon on this matter I looked up the record and reviewed it. I wanted to refresh my mind as to some of the things that happened in respect of old age security. When the Liberal government was formed in 1963 under Mr. Pearson, the universal old age security pension was \$65 a month and was paid to a person aged 70 or over. In 1964, Mr. Pearson's government raised the old age pension to \$75 a month and a 2 per cent escalation clause was included to offset the cost of living. That was done in 1966. In 1970, the old age security pension was set at \$80 per month, and in the same year pensions became payable to persons 65 years of age and over. That was as a result of the action taken in 1966. This year the government introduced an escalation clause to fully adjust the old age pensions to increases in the cost of living. I think this has been a major and a significant move. People speak about the small amount of money involved, but the principle is extremely important. This escalation was built in, just as the member for Winnipeg North Centre says it should be built into other areas of our pensions system.

Mr. Harney: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough West (Mr. Harney) rises on a point of order.

Mr. Harney: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member now addressing the House would accept a question?

Mr. Danson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to accept a question from the hon. member for Scarborough West.

Mr. Harney: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would give us any idea of his estimate of the amount of increase in the old age pension that would be needed to obviate the necessity for the trade-offs he has spoken of between nutrition and medicine?

Mr. Danson: It would be significant.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Danson: I have never been satisfied, and I suppose I never will be in this area, but I hope I will be satisfied that we have done all we can as a government. I think the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) knows my feeling and the feeling of many members of our caucus. We have to do the best we can. There are other trade-offs in taxation, and as to whether we look after people on a universal basis or on a selective basis. These are trade-offs that we have to make.