

of that society. We must change the institutions of this society. Institutions are only man made and we, as members of parliament, must change them. There are very few of us who can do it by ourselves or who can change history ourselves. We have had, for example, a few people like Martin Luther, Karl Marx, Thomas Jefferson and even Christopher Columbus, when he discovered a new world, who have changed history. But this does not happen very often and will not happen to any people in this chamber. The history of our times will be written by what each and every one of us does as individuals in his or her own community.

• (8:10 p.m.)

I plead with you, Mr. Speaker, to make parliament more supreme as a law making body here in Canada. I think if we do not do this we will have nobody to blame but ourselves. If people become more and more restless and if people like the old age pensioners in this country do not get more money we will have nobody to blame but ourselves. If people start protesting we should not ask why. Let us start reflecting upon ourselves and this institution.

I think at this time, before going on, I should like to read a couple of quotations by some gentlemen who I think people here will consider speak the gospel. First, I should like to quote the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson, when speaking at Queen's University on January 31 this year. He said:

Not dissenters, but those who would diminish or deny the right to dissent are really the dangerous revolutionaries. By damming the avenues of peaceful and evolutionary change, they make violent change inevitable.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleading that we make some basic changes today. The former president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, said:

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.

So, therefore, I think it is our duty as members of parliament to ask that many things be changed and indeed make changes in a lot of the things in our society. This is why I stand up today in an effort to fight for the old age pensioners of Canada and the old age pensioners in the constituency of Yorkton-Melville. I think all of us know there is a minimum of at least one and a quarter million old age pensioners here in Canada. Many of these people are not living on a decent standard. Many of them are in poverty or are living at a mere subsistence level. I should

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like to quote a couple of paragraphs from *The Elder Statesman* of November, 1968. The article is entitled "Senior Citizens 'The Victims of Inflation'". It reads:

Senior citizens have long been the victims of inflation.

The post-war (World War II) price spiral has gone up and up, without let-up.

As wages and prices expand pensioner incomes shrink. The small monthly cheques they receive buy less and less.

Wages and prices shoot upward each year. Until now pensions have been fixed, with only slight increases granted at rare intervals. These pitifully small increases to pitifully small pensions, have tended to be "too little," and often, "too late."

Later, in the same article one reads:

It is obvious that the gap between wage income and pension income will continue to widen. It is equally obvious that with a small increase in income, and a big increase in prices, and cost of living each year, pensioners are dropping to lower depths into the pit of poverty.

I think it is a crime in a country like ours that many of our pensioners are among the poorest in the poor wage brackets. I think it is a crime to give these people rewards of poverty and subsistence. Often the type of pensions we give these people are hand-outs, like welfare. To many of these people, this is very humiliating. This must be drastically changed. For example, many of the old age pensioners who receive \$110 a month have many expenses. They have the expenses of housing, and all that goes with it. They have to pay for fuel, electricity and telephone as well as the maintenance of the house. They have to pay health costs. In Saskatchewan, old people are more fortunate because there is a comprehensive medical care plan in that province. But they still have to pay for their drugs and many of the old people have high expenses in respect of drugs. They have to pay for clothing, for food and for many of the other incidental expenses involved in everyday living. This is unjust.

I think in every city, small town and community in Canada, all of us know many examples of people living in poverty who are almost starving. I remember during the election campaign, when I was knocking on doors in a small community, while going down a street I saw an old shack which I thought was abandoned. I was about to walk by until I saw smoke coming from the chimney. I walked on, and there was an old man 80 years old standing in the doorway. He was dirty. It was a one room shack and the place was dark. He did not have electricity but used coal oil and gas lamps to light his house.