

Adjournment Debate

als aged 60 to 64 was a definite commitment made during the election campaign.

Nobody denies the fact that this group has been identified as one of the most vulnerable groups amongst all the 60 to 64 year olds who are not yet entitled to pension and need help. What surprises me is that a parliamentary task force on pensions, set up in previous years, has produced a report which recommended the measure we just passed. The Hon. member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) is so interested in social affairs that I suppose he was a member of that task force.

Mr. Malépart: No.

Mrs. Bertrand: That surprises me. I thought he would have been.

Then, I inform you that your committee, this task force set up by your party, proposed that very same idea. There is a real and urgent need to help that group, given the fact that more than 60 per cent of widows and widowers aged 60 to 64 would be eligible to the spouse's allowance program whose benefits are income tested.

The proposed measure will do away with the discrimination against widows and widowers aged 60 to 64 which exists in the

present Old Age Security Act. As you know, at the present time, spouse's allowance is only paid to widows and widowers aged 60 to 64 who were in receipt of that allowance before their spouse died.

In brief, this appears to me as a logical means of helping further some people in need, before they are entitled to a pension. About 85,000 people, mostly women, will benefit from that measure as of September 1985, when it becomes effective.

However, I admit that other groups in that same age bracket have financial difficulties. But, we have such fiscal constraints that we must set priorities. I hope the Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie is not suggesting that we refrain from helping widows and widowers in need as long as the government cannot give the same help to all people in need who have not yet reached retirement age. And as I said before, the government does not have the means to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

The House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.