

Senior Citizens' Day

I should like to know what she thinks in her heart of hearts. I should like to know how it is that these people, who are prepared to pay tribute to our older citizens who have built this country and made great sacrifices to raise their families, are not willing to stand up and speak against the Government's decision to deindex Old Age Security pensions. How is it that all senior citizens whom he met were in favour of cutting their pension cheques by 3 per cent? And if the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) announced today a fully indexed increase in the Old Age Security pension will be fully indexed, it's not because of PC Members. It is today that the Minister has made this announcement and it is today that a motion was introduced to designate one day for them. I wonder if it is not out of sheer remorse.

Yes, you should be ashamed of yourselves!

I understand why you would be ashamed of yourselves, but you will not redeem yourself simply by designating a Senior Citizens' Day. It is not a day but a week it should take, Mr. Speaker! A whole week would be required to consult senior citizens, seek their participation, ascertain their needs. From now on, Canadian men and women will no longer accept that Parliamentarians decide for senior citizens in Canada. Senior citizens are clever enough to want to participate and meet their members to tell them: This is what we need and this is what we want, as far as housing needs, social policies, cultural, sporting and leisure activities are concerned. These are adults; they are intelligent and able people. Tomorrow, it will be our turn. It is not because one day you are 64 and the next day 65 that you lose all your ability and intelligence, Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite! We have to put to good use the talents, the natural abilities, the knowledge and the experience of our senior citizens. They are willing to use them for the benefit of all Members of Parliament—

An Hon. Member: We have to listen to them.

Mr. Malépart:—but, as my Leader has just said, we have to listen to them. We have to do what they want. They do not want to have a special day just for show, just for appearances' sake. Was this decision made by the Conservative caucus or by the federation of senior citizens' clubs, Mr. Speaker? I would really like the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister to rise and tell us whether the Quebec Federation of Senior Citizens made such a request. I did not hear about it and I am very close to these groups. Was this requested by the AQDR, an association which came here and asked to meet the Quebec Conservative caucus to defend their rights under the employment development programs, but the Conservatives refused to see them. How hypocritical for these people to refuse such a request one day and to do this the very same week. It is really too much, Mr. Speaker. Today, someone rises to say: We are proud of our senior citizens because they have built this country and sacrificed a lot for us and we are going to have a special day for them. Mr. Speaker, the time when others make your decisions for you is over. People want action. They have

had their fill of the broken promises of the Prime Minister. They have had enough of the messages and speeches of the Prime Minister. They have had enough.

One year and a few months later, the people are fed up with the comments of the Prime Minister and the Conservative Members of Parliament. The people say: We want action, we want to be consulted. You have not consulted us. You have misled us. We want you to listen to us and do what we want. We know our own needs, we know what we want and we know the answers, but if you want to listen to us and help us, we are going to tell each Member of Parliament what they can do. However, I have not seen one of them do so, Mr. Speaker. I have distributed petitions in the House. It was under a year ago that the Government discriminated against widows and widowers in its spouse allowance legislation. If only one Conservative Member had had the courage and the honesty to rise and say that he wanted the spouse allowance to be extended in 1986 to people living alone, whether they are single, separated or divorced! At this time, Mr. Speaker, there are still 80,000 people in Canada, most of whom are women, whose applications for the spouse allowance are rejected by the Health and Welfare officials simply because they are single, separated or divorced. Mr. Speaker, those people are between 60 and 65 years of age, and they are turned down because of that party's decision. And you think that all those people in each and every one of our constituencies today will buy that proposal to have a day designated in their honour?

• (1810)

An Hon. Member: They are not stupid.

Mr. Malépart: They are not stupid, as my Leader said. And they say: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Quebec, we know what those words mean: No thank you, Mr. Speaker. It means we will not be fooled. This is unacceptable and I feel certain that my colleague for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone), who is very dedicated and has a long experience of many years with all the issues relating to the aged and social problems, will want to rise.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, there is something I have to say: We have leaders in each of our parties, but the difference between my leader and the one you have on the other side is this: mine is sincere, honest, and a man of his word. Mine does not work on the basis of winning votes and for his image on TV. He works on the basis of honestly fighting for the rights of Canadian men and women. My leader accepts that we fight, that we struggle to defend the rights of citizens. Yours thinks only about presiding before TV screens and press cameras. It is for a reason that the Hon. Member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Côté) was looking up the results of the polls. He was anxious to know what percentage of the people oppose and disagree with the Government policies, but this today is going a bit too far.