

suits them well, a very low one. Either wilfully or by ignorance, they make no difference with the concept of discrimination in the legal sense of the term. A distinction must be made between a right and a service. Otherwise, discrimination can be seen everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, it is all too easy to refer to particular cases encountered in our ridings and say that so-and-so, being separated or divorced, is not eligible for the spouse allowance. It is all too easy to underestimate the scope of the legislation and raise a special problem or the case of a citizen who will not be eligible. What we should consider, Mr. Speaker, is the bill in its entirety. As mentioned by other speakers, a move in the direction suggested by the opposition would represent a \$1.5 billion cost in a single year.

I would remind the Liberal party that in February last year, their Minister of Finance realized that the treasury was empty. He announced that, from last October, if I am not mistaken, the sales tax would be increased by 1 per cent. Already in February, the government knew that their coffers were empty. At the beginning of the election campaign, they realized they were in trouble—I will refrain from referring to their shameless waste—that they were going to be beaten. The Canadians, who witnessed the whole thing, literally evicted the former government.

Mr. Speaker, we are proposing a series of social and economic measures, because it is fine to set up the best social structure in the world but without a sound economic system, short term measures will not go far enough. A moment ago, the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault) said that we were providing funds to the provinces. We said from the start, and it can be confirmed now that we are in power, that we would go through a period of consultation.

• (1620)

As I have expressed or stated on previous occasions, Mr. Speaker, there is no magic formula to any system. There are, on the other hand, favorable attitudes and resolves. In short, what is needed or what we think is needed is to convince the various levels of government to reach a consensus and pull together in the same direction with all interested parties being involved, so that we can truly improve the economic framework and, ultimately, update our social legislation accordingly.

I would be delighted to deal today with a bill that would include all the people who are currently excluded from this bill, but we must realize that this laudable objective must be supported by reality; in view of the situation we have inherited, we have chosen to act in a reasonable way. There is something which becomes clear when we return to our own ridings: the Canadian people are aware that this Government is trying to act in a responsible way, because of the manner in which we administer the country and the direction we set for all Canadian men and women. I have had opportunities and I will have more opportunities to meet with senior citizens and discuss

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with them the legislation from which they will benefit or not benefit. When we explain to them how things stand in a calm way, not in the vociferous way which the opposition seems to prefer, when we take the time to examine the situation and explain the development and progress, first of the situation we have inherited, and second the steps we have taken to improve this situation, the people are all for us, they congratulate us, and one can sense a feeling of hope which we will not disappoint.

In this context, Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) who, in spite of very difficult circumstances and within a very short time, has managed to put an end to the old discrimination imposed by the previous government. We are gradually opening the gate, and from the legal point of view, this is no longer a form of discrimination, but rather a breakthrough toward short and middle term improvements which we aim to bring to full achievement.

I am pleased, therefore, to support the provisions of this Bill and I am sure that my colleagues will do likewise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marin): Questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) has the floor.

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the Hon. Member who just spoke, and I must say that I miss the former member for Lotbinière, as do the people in his riding. I am sure, because he was not here simply to sell the Government's wares. He was here to truly defend the interests of his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, the comments I have just heard . . . He said he removed one discrimination and created two others, Mr. Speaker. This is true Tory policy. I know that in Quebec, all those Members are not true Tories, because some of them happened to be last-minute Conservatives. But not the Hon. Member who just spoke. He is a Conservative to the core. He could easily live in the West with all those Conservative Members. I would like the Hon. Member to tell us when he goes to his constituency office, when he goes calling on senior citizens' clubs, how he is going to respond when someone says to him: "I have worked all my life, I have raised children, I have paid taxes like everyone else, but it so happened that I have had to separate." We know there are programs and initiatives for the benefit of battered wives. That someone will tell him: "Should I have stayed on and kept being battered in order to qualify? How come you, the Member of Parliament for Lotbinière (Mr. Tremblay), did not stand up and fight for me? You said you were taking a short step forward. Then how come the Minister of Justice said: "We are going to increase the judges' salaries, they only earn \$100,000?" What will the Hon. Member for Lotbinière answer to that?"

Mr. Tremblay (Lotbinière): First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say this, if I may: I have never heard the Hon. Member for