

Interim Supply

across this land will have no income whatsoever, except their old age pension. This should be striking evidence of the position in which we are placing these people. Just the other night I went down to the House of Commons post office, and while I was getting my mail I looked at the bulletin board and saw a notice advertising a bed-sitting room for \$90 a month.

In this affluent Canada of ours where we have the second highest standard of living in the world, we are giving these people, this 70 per cent of all the women across the land, \$75 a month. Mr. Chairman, I wish to appeal to every member of parliament here. Is this justice; is this justice to the people who have helped to make this country? I should like to go a little further and say that 60 per cent of the men, aged 70 and over, will have no income other than their old age pension.

● (1:00 p.m.)

These pensioners are in desperate need. If a pensioner lives alone in the city of Toronto he finds that he requires \$120 per month as a minimum in order to survive. In spite of these facts we expect these people to live on \$75 per month. We on this side of the house have asked over and over again that the old age pension be increased to \$100 per month, but nothing has been done in this regard. We are being completely unjust to the elderly people who built this country.

Let me go a little further and suggest that these elderly people are the people who have more sickness than others, because as they grow older they develop diseases and require more care, drugs and better foods containing more protein. The very things of which they require more have increased in price by at least 10 per cent in the food line in the past year, yet what are we doing about this situation? We are still imposing the iniquitous 11 per cent tax on drugs, which means a 20 per cent increase in cost at the retail level on the people least able to afford it.

I close my remarks with an appeal on behalf of these forgotten people—and they have been forgotten or something would have been done for them long ago.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a question? I am sure he is aware of the fact that the government has indicated it will take action on any recommendation by the drug committee, which will be holding meetings very soon, to the effect that the tax should be removed as a step toward reducing the cost of drugs.

Mr. Rynard: All I have to say in answer to that remark is that as far as the people across

[Mr. Rynard.]

Canada are concerned, this is an iniquitous tax and has increased the cost of drugs used by those people who are the least able to afford them. Surely it does not take any recommendation of a committee to make us realize that this tax should be removed.

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Chairman, would the Minister of National Revenue indicate the recommendation which was followed when the 11 per cent tax was imposed?

Mr. Benson: The 11 per cent sales tax on drugs is not a recently imposed tax, but one that has been in existence for many years. Perhaps I should also point out that it was not removed by the previous government during its term in office.

Mr. Rynard: I should like to remind the minister that I advocated the removal of this tax when this party was in power.

[Translation]

Mr. Racine: Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss a piece of legislation which is of great interest to me as mayor and reeve of the county of Beauce. It deals with the winter works program and is administered by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

You will recall that when this legislation came into force, 50 per cent of the payments were made by the federal government, whereas the contribution of the various provinces amounted to 40 per cent. At that time, our municipalities had to absorb the difference, that is 10 per cent.

A little later the province of Quebec agreed to contribute 50 per cent, so that today the winter works carried out in our municipalities are paid in full by the two governments.

However, thanks to the experience gained in the last few years, I feel that this legislation should be amended to allow the municipalities to benefit from part of the grants and use them for the cost of materials.

We know how winter works are carried out in our various municipalities. Sewer systems are installed, ditches are dug with pick and shovel when it would be easy and much cheaper to use bulldozers.

While expressing this wish, I also feel that if the various governments granted a percentage on materials, we would see in each of our municipalities new buildings which would be very useful to the people and would, at the same time, help to pay the same salaries during the winter off-season.