

The Economy

spouse's allowance is cut off at age 63 and she must wait until she is 65 to qualify for old age security and a guaranteed income supplement. I do not know which is worse, the widow or the spinster who never receives the allowance, or the spouse who becomes a widow and then loses it. Either way it is an act of complete unfairness and I insist, Mr. Speaker, that this cannot go on.

One of these days—I do not know when—we might have another election in this country—

An hon. Member: It may go like the spouse's allowance.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That is an interesting remark that perhaps the hon. member might expand. But if we do not get something solved about this issue before the election, I hope that in the election campaign the Prime Minister may complete the promise he made in 1974. Election campaigns do have that advantage. All sorts of promises get made. It is quite a study afterwards to line up the promises that were made and notice how many of them go unfulfilled. There is not time today to list the 1974 promises that were not fulfilled. In this case the fulfilling of the spouse's allowance promise left the very problems which the Prime Minister had in mind at that time. If they are not solved before the 1978, 1979 or the 1980 election, I hope that during that campaign, if it is for no other reason that to try to get votes, the Prime Minister will say, "We are going to correct this situation."

● (1442)

It is completely false and unfair to say to women between the ages of 60 and 65 that their entitlement to a pension is not based on their need or on what they have done in terms of work to raise a family or work in the community. Their entitlement to a pension between the ages of 60 and 65 is based on their being able to give the correct answer to one question: have you got a man? That is a blot on parliament and, in particular, a blot on the government which brought in this legislation.

I suggest that a solution to it is very simple. It is the solution in paragraph (2) of the motion we are debating this afternoon, namely, that pensions should be available at age 60 on a voluntary basis for all those who are in that bracket.

There are other things as well that can be done to correct the unfairness in the Canada Pension Plan and the public service plan. Also, something should be done about plans in the private sector. We should look at this in the concept of providing jobs for persons who can be employed at younger years if we move these people out, but we must not let this issue of the right of women to pensions in that age bracket sit around any longer.

I congratulate my friends in the Social Credit party on placing this issue before us this afternoon. Again, it is a motion that does not come to a vote. As a Liberal said the other day, on another issue, he was glad that issue did not come to a vote. What he meant was that he could speak in favour of it without having to risk voting opposite to the way he spoke.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

This motion does not call for a vote. I hope some of the Liberals who speak today will recognize that the Prime Minister was right in 1974 about the spouse's allowance, that it would create problems. I hope they will express their views to their government to the effect that this ought to be changed. It is not good enough just to continue the allowance to the spouse who has become a widow. That ought to be done, but it does not solve the problem. It is not good enough to keep that tied in any way to the marital status of the woman.

The best answer is to make pensions available at age 60 on a voluntary basis. That should be done with regard to old age security and the Canada Pension Plan. Private plans should be encouraged to do the same. That would start to improve the lot of those hard working men to whom I have referred who have spent 30 to 35 years in the rat race and have looked forward to a few years' retirement. Do that and you will correct the situation for the women in the same age bracket. But for God's sake, let's not just talk about it year in and year out. Let's do something about it right away.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Albert Béchard (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, never in my short life have I seen so accurately stated the ideology of the Social Credit Party of Canada than in the motion it brought forward through its visible leader, the hon. member for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier), and interim creditist House leader. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, upon close scrutiny of the motion moved by the interim leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada, it can easily be seen that this masterpiece, reflects exactly the Social Credit philosophy. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I will read the motion:

That this House strongly condemns the government: (1) for having failed at the task in the fight against inflation and unemployment which are affecting mostly the workers between 18 and 30 years of age;

Secondly, and this is where it begins:

(2) for failing to present to parliament new and effective measures such as granting at age 60 the right to the voluntary benefits of the old age security pension;

(3) for not having paid a national dividend . . .

. . . and this is where things get worse:

. . . as a means to increase the buying power of Canadians in order for them to benefit by the surplus of production deriving from progress and technology; and

(4) for not having agreed to present new legislation that would have stimulated the consumption of Canadian products, such as a discount on retail prices of Canadian-made products of which the percentage would be determined by the volume of the gross national product, and that the financing not be done by means of income tax, but by creating new credits emanating . . .

. . . and here is the cure-all:

. . . from the Bank of Canada and loaned to the government at an interest rate relating to the cost of administration.

And at the end of that disturbing paragraph Social Credit sympathizers can see that mention is made of an interest rate, and until now there was never any talk of interest. But now the Social Credit Party of Canada has recognized that when one