

last understood that it is important to implement such a legislation.

Miss Monique Bégin (Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, it is with great compassion that I have given thought to the motion put forward today by the Social Crediters in order to reduce, to lower to 60 the pensionable age. Besides, I must admit that my compassion for senior citizens, not for the Social Crediters, suffers badly from the hidden electoralism which I have had to hear pouring forth for a while from opposition speakers.

For anyone engaged in an election campaign, especially in Quebec, may I suggest that a lot of that kind of propositions made by the candidates of the Social Credit Party might amount to gross electoralism. This is evidenced, for example, by this cute little green book whose printing, by the way, must have cost a fortune for a so-called needy and needy inclined party, and which has been distributed in my constituency and is entitled "Le Parti Crédit Social propose". We find on page 9, and this is the startling example I use as an evidence, or at least as a rather obvious indication that the proposition, the motion now before us might not be inspired as they would like us to believe by such pure, candid and responsible motives.

● (1650)

Today, in a rather vague motion, we find a proposal to lower the eligibility age from 65 as it is now to 60. In a few minutes I will speak purposely on its cost, as I belong to a government party which is responsible for the costs involved in that.

During the election campaign, hardly four or five months ago, much more than that was promised, it was not difficult as they were not in power. They were far from Parliament and questions could not be put to them either. So here is what they promised: for any older citizen, not 65 but 60 or more, a supplement to the pension—now paid to people over 65—of \$1,500 a year. And for any spouse under 60, the pension plus a supplement of \$1,000 a year. We must remember that, if we put that in dollars and cents as we have to in the end, the taxpayers, the Canadian people as a whole are paying for the programs created afterwards by the federal government.

Here is what it means in figures: there are now about two million Canadians who receive either the basic monthly pension of \$117 or also the guaranteed income supplement. To those two million people would be added—just like that, as if it were a drop in the bucket—all those between 60 and 65, another 1,150,000 persons, pardon me, more precisely 830,000 persons, plus the spouses under 60, that is each spouse of a person qualified for a pension, which means 320,000 persons. Therefore the two million recipients would grow to—

Mr. Lalonde: Two billion.

Miss Bégin: —recipients, I am not talking about benefits.

Mr. Lefebvre: They do not care.

Miss Bégin: The two million recipients would grow to 3,150,000 and, to top it off, just like that, a small \$1,500 a year. Easier said than done when one is not on the govern-

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ment side and cannot possibly hope to be. I challenge the Social Credit leader, whom I can see seated at his desk and who has been applauding me for a while, I do not know for what reason, I challenge him to tell me at once how much that program would cost the federal government, namely the taxpayers. Does he have the slightest idea about it? I just took a piece of paper and a pencil—

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I seek the privilege of answering my hon. colleague. Since Women's Year is coming, I would not dare take up a challenge by a woman.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order, please. The hon. member may request the right to reply, but he will do so at the right time, which is when he is recognized to make a contribution. This is a motion by the Créditiste party and there will be ample opportunity in the debate for members of that party to take the floor.

[Translation]

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, my calculations amount to four billion dollars. Here, Mr. Minister, are the billions—four billion dollars, that is two thirds of the whole budget of the province of Quebec.

That is very easy. I noticed, for that matter, that the previous speaker, the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle), goes hard at it when he says this, very piously, and he is not the only member of the opposition who talked very piously this afternoon—everybody here is particularly religious on that subject today, whereas I contend that it is a public lie to deceive the people into thinking that we can afford this immediately—he says he would with great pleasure vote with the Créditistes on this resolution if it were put, while knowing very well—for he has been in this House long enough—that this resolution does not call for a vote, since it expires automatically under Standing Order 58(11). I find it a little easy for one to advocate something one knows very well one will never be able to put into practice. That amounts to telling the people, who do not have the same reference documents as we do, things that they are not in a position to check for themselves.

Going rapidly over the present situation, we know that old age pension was granted in 1952. At that time there was no guaranteed income supplement, and the pension only consisted in a monthly \$40. A more flexible system was implemented in 1967 to alleviate the situation of people who were really in need. The concept of a guaranteed income according to needs was introduced, and both amounts have of course gone up steadily. It may not be as high as we might hope, for we can never ask for too much on behalf of old people. And that very feeling of guilt that we all share in respect of retired people is currently being taken advantage of with all that fuss about the alleged emergency to lower immediately the retirement age for everyone, and to multiply the amounts to be paid under that program.

I think people's emotions are being manipulated—at least they were considerably manipulated during the electoral campaign—for in our days when the bulk of population concentrates in towns where families do not have sufficient accommodation to keep their old parents, and when provincial governments, in many instances, have