

Old Age Security Act

government. When the next generation, our children, are running the Government, they will be able to do a lot more for their senior citizens or unemployed youth if we leave them a debt of \$30 billion and not \$300 billion. Now is the time to work toward this goal.

I would like to say in conclusion that I am indeed very happy that we will very quickly be able to provide some badly needed assistance to elderly people since it appears that we have the support of all Parties on this Bill.

In the course of this debate, some well deserved attention has been given to the needs of the older part of our population. Bill C-26 is a good and substantial start on the Government's intention to address the host of problems of this nature which confronts society. I am optimistic and confident that a number of other issues will be dealt with by this House in such a constructive and expedient manner. Hon. Members of all Parties have used the occasion of this debate to draw attention to the serious questions that must be dealt with to ensure that our seniors enjoy full and equal participation in society. I will take this opportunity publicly to urge my caucus to continue its consideration of measures designed to assist older members of the labour force who, because of changing technologies and demands for skills in the market, often find themselves dislocated from employment. These people are legitimately concerned that they will not find some way to contribute to society and earn a living from the skills they have relied on for so many years.

Finally, I will say that I support this Bill with great enthusiasm because of the recognition it gives to our collective obligation to widows and widowers. It is good that so many people undergoing hardship at this time will have their problems alleviated, and I am happy that this Bill has allowed the Government to recognize those who have sacrificed so much in contributing to their marriages and families. Over the next few months and years of this session it will become obvious that the tradition of this Government is one of responsible stewardship, with a conscience for those who are truly disadvantaged.

May I also say, Mr. Speaker, that we should not look to Government alone when addressing the needs of those who are in financial need. Let each of us ask ourselves what we can do to help a disadvantaged brother. Are we not our brother's keeper? I hope that all Hon. Members of the House will join me in supporting this very thoughtful, compassionate and practical piece of legislation.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member on that triumph of piety over precision and ask him whether or not he holds the same view about throwing money at problems when it comes to our economic problems. I notice that the Hon. Member, like many other Conservatives I have had the opportunity to listen to over the years, is always very quick to criticize the throwing of money at social problems. In fact, when I asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) a question in the House the other day about the corporate tax sector, he said, "We don't believe we can just throw money at the environment". But we never hear from Conservatives about the habit which has developed in this

country over the last ten or 20 years, or even before that, of throwing money at the corporate sector in order to create jobs with no guarantees that those jobs will be created. There are no performance guarantees, no strings attached. We do not see any indication from the Government at this point that it is prepared to stop throwing that kind of money at problems. There are no strong indications there will be tax reforms so that we will stop throwing money at the rich in the form of reduced tax rates and enabling some of the wealthy in this country not to pay any taxes at all.

Is the Hon. Member against that kind of throwing money at problems? If he is, will he give us a commitment, as a colleague and an Hon. Member of the House of Commons, that he will go after his Government to stop that kind of throwing of money at problems, which, I might say, amounts to a heck of a lot more money than we are talking about when we are talking about pension reform?

● (1720)

Mr. Jepson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie) for his question. As one member of the Conservative Government, I want to see responsible stewardship with accountability to all Members of the House for the Government's programs and spending. In addressing the allocation of funds to areas of legitimate need, I have observed over the years that the NDP is all "spend", but I do not see any emphasis on finding where the dollars are to come from.

I happen to be an individual who has a great deal of confidence in the free enterprise system. I believe our corporate citizens make a great contribution toward the wealth and stability of our country. I have every confidence that the business community, if properly and responsibly encouraged, can be and is the only vehicle for the growth needed to make dollars available for the programs so desperately needed. I hope that answers the question.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is obviously practising for the day when he will be in Cabinet because he did not answer the question at all. I asked him whether or not he was against throwing money at the wealthy in the form of tax concessions and loopholes. He says the NDP is in favour of spending. Well, it seems to me that over the years we have developed a great way of spending that is not always recognized as spending. It is called tax expenditures. The last time we had an accounting of tax expenditures in this country was in 1979. To its credit, the Progressive Conservative Government of the day produced a tax expenditure account. Those expenditures were in the neighbourhood of some \$32 billion. At that time the yearly deficit was, I believe, around \$14 billion. There we were in the position of having an annual deficit of \$14 billion while not collecting some \$32 billion. That is a form of spending.

What I want to hear from the Member, if he is truly concerned about government spending, is why he does not stand in his place and reject the kind of hidden spending that goes on every time the Government allows taxes to be