

However, that report was quickly forgotten by his Party and swept under the rug. I indicated that, contrary to the promises being made at that time by his Leader and now by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), the problem of reducing the level of unemployment in our country in the next 15 or 20 years was going to be well nigh insuperable and that we had to start looking, therefore, at other means of spreading the available work if we were not going to condemn large proportions of our population to a lifetime of continuous unemployment or risk of unemployment.

That is a very relevant issue. I probably agree with 80 or 90 per cent of the recommendations that were in the Hon. Member's report, which I found to be excellent. However, to raise that issue in the House and talk about early retirement as one of the constructive things we should be looking at through the leadership of the House of Commons in order to help our older people and also help provide opportunities for our young people is something that can only be seen as a positive contribution. I recognize that it will not be done through amendments to this law, that people like the Hon. Member and myself should hammer away to raise awareness in the House of Commons of the fact that that impact of technological change is among us. It is creating high unemployment. We have to find ways of bringing unemployment down.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his comments on the report but would point out something that seems to have escaped his Party. Challenge 85, the program for youth, is based on the concept of that report. Future employment programs which will be announced are also based on the thread of that report. I would hope we might hear a little more positive comment about the direction of employment policy in this country because it is in accord with the recommendations made in the report.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Cassidy: I will leave it to the next Member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to speak as often during this Parliament as there are so many new and excellent Members who should have an opportunity. However, after listening to the quality of the debate from the other side, which I found very discouraging, I want to make a few comments on Bill 26. The purpose of this Bill is to assist low-income married couples where only one spouse is an OAS/GIS pensioner.

It is interesting to look at the history of pensions and benefits for the elderly over the years. This first started in Canada in 1908. Further legislation was introduced in 1927, 1948, 1951, 1952, 1957, 1959, 1962, 1963, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1983 and now in 1985. There is further legislation that is to follow with benefits for veterans and their widows which I will cover in

just a moment. We have not been backward in this country in the pension field.

In the last number of elections when I have been campaigning, I have found that not every senior citizen is destitute, hard up and broke. Many of them have provided for their own retirement. Not everyone totally relies on the Government to look after them. That is encouraging. Many senior citizens, including widows and widowers, live in their own homes or high-rise apartment buildings. They are not all in senior citizens' homes. The point seems to be continuously made that every senior citizen is destitute, but that is not true. Over the last number of years many Canadians have been providing for their retirement through RRSPs. More and more people are paying into RRSPs. They will retire with a handsome income from that. Therefore, not everyone is always looking for a government pension.

If this country was not bankrupt, if we did not have such a debt load because of the years of Liberal mismanagement, there would be a lot more money for widows and veterans. I will cover the debt and mismanagement in a minute when I explain to the Canadian people the problems that we have.

A veterans' Bill was tabled yesterday. This Government is allotting an additional \$22 million this year to cover pensions of veterans and their widows. This will benefit 90,000 pensioners plus 51,000 spouses, children and orphans. Therefore, we are helping a group of individuals there. The third amendment in the veterans' legislation will extend the same rights to survivors of pensioners who have been receiving attendance and/or exceptional incapacity allowances.

A very serious problem regarding veterans' pensions is the length of time that veterans and widows of veterans have had to wait for their pensions to be processed. We are going to eliminate that excessive time. The Liberal Party has been very negligent in dealing with veterans' problems over the years.

There is another example of what we will be doing for pensions in that veterans' Bill. The second amendment will continue a disability pension at the married rate for 12 months following the death of a pensioner. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the reduction to a single rate now begins one month after the pensioner dies. We will be looking after widows immediately. They will not be left destitute.

● (1430)

This change is also important and is in line with the provisions of the War Veterans Allowance Act which has been in place for years. About 6,000 widows and a few widowers are expected to benefit from this change. With each Bill and with each passing day, we are looking after another group that absolutely needs to be looked after.

The Government has also announced that there will be increases in the Canada Pension Plan benefits in January and increases in the family allowances were announced. Over 3.6 million Canadian families that receive family allowance on behalf of 6.6 million children will get a raise in the new year. That is another group after whom we are looking with our limited resources.