

divorced, widowed, deserted or single that you are going to take away the full \$35 increase in July, tell them. Tell them that you will do as you did the last time when you robbed them of \$2.7 million. Tell them this time if you are going to take away from them \$6 to \$7 million. I would like him to say that. On Saturday, he will be addressing senior citizens in Verdun probably to convince them to vote for separation. The elderly should ask Mr. Lazure this question and obtain a reply, to find out where the PQ government stands on this issue.

Messrs. Lévesque and Lazure, how dare you claim in your pensioner's booklet which you have published jointly with the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de Montréal that if the Yes team wins, nothing will change and the pension cheques will continue to arrive the following day. You know perfectly well that after you take action to separate Quebec from the rest of Canada, no matter how many months have passed after the referendum, you will have enough money to pay the pensions, but not enough to pay the supplements. You know that for the year 1978, before the \$20 increase to the supplement, and before the new \$35 increase granted in July, still based on my tax reckoning, Quebecers received \$120 million more in pensions than they paid out to the Canadian government. Would you dare deny that?

Another cheque which is sent directly by the federal government to the people is for family allowances and child tax credits. First of all, I want to make it clear that 75 per cent of the family allowance cheques to Quebec mothers come from the federal government, which means that the greater part comes from the federal and the smaller part comes from Quebec. Here again Quebec is the net winner in that it gets more family allowances and tax credits than it pays out in taxes, again because of the redistribution of income from the richer to the not so rich provinces.

So in that field we have an additional \$80 million for family allowances, an additional \$60 million more for the child tax credit scheme that people have received as benefits for children. On that subject, the program of the Parti Québécois is quite clear, there is no mention of that at all and one can surmise that the vote of elderly people, because they have the right to vote, is perhaps more important in their eyes than the fate of children despite the state of poverty and the lack of opportunities prevailing among many families. Children cannot vote. I leave it at that. One thing for sure is that where poverty still exists and is unacceptable mothers will have to do without the child tax credit if the Yes vote wins. So I say: Where is the good government?

If you add up the social programs instituted by the Canadian government you will notice that Quebecers collect cheques worth \$680 million more than they pay in taxes to the Canadian government. That of course comes in addition to the famous equalization scheme which in itself is worth \$1.27 billion a year. So I say that our social system is probably the most eloquent evidence of the value of federalism and of what

federalism can give to ordinary citizens, because it is in the provinces' best interest to help the economically weaker ones to go through difficult periods. The system works both ways, by the way, since these provinces get stronger and there comes a time when they can pay their full tax share.

Were Quebec to become independent, then it could, of course, collect the taxes, the same amount it now pays to Ottawa. With this they could pay the pensions but not the supplement because they would not have enough money to pay this supplement to the 340,000 pensioners who receive this benefit in Quebec. So what would they do? They would have, beside the \$500 million deficit in education, another deficit of \$680 million for social programs alone. What are they going to do? Raise taxes? I for one say no because—and I see in front of me the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. LaSalle) who certainly agrees—Quebeckers already have the heaviest tax burden in Canada. Could they raise their budgetary deficit? I do not think so, given the present circumstances.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it was somehow repugnant to me to report on the social programs organized by the Canadian government in favour of Quebec simply because I feel that people are not for sale; pensions and social allowances are rights that people acquire by contributing to the building of our society. They are rights and not rewards that people will be granted according to their vote. I decided I had to find out what those figures were to show how Premier Lévesque and the PQ government try to psychologically manipulate the elderly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): I regret to inform the minister that the time allotted to her has expired. Nevertheless she could carry on with unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Miss Bégin: I am very grateful to my colleagues for their good will, Mr. Speaker. All I want to say, and I shall try to be short, is that pensioners—and I take it everybody agrees on this—all need to be protected and reassured as to their economic security. It is crystal clear. But pensioners are tougher than that and fighting with figures on their back is to me the worst favour that the PQ could do them. That's what I think, and what I would like to say today is that people want to know the facts clearly and then be able to judge for themselves. The golden age clubs where I go regularly as the minister responsible for pensioners know very well that we have not dragged the pension question into the referendum debate. The PQ government decided to do so and with such insistence that I had no other choice as the minister responsible for all Canadian pensioners than to set the record right about the social programs offered to the population.

In closing, I wish to say that there are still so many urgent things that should be undertaken to continue to remedy the injustices and give everyone a fair chance. In the next few