

Who, Mr. Speaker, built these towns and villages that are the pride of our land? Who built our beautiful country parishes, not with the modern tools we have now, but, on the contrary, with makeshift means, by dint of ingenuity which I would call heroic? It is to elderly people, 60 years old or over, that we are indebted and should pay our debt with love and pride for the development of Canada an unprecedented record in the GNP, which enable us to increase substantially the old age security pension.

• (2230)

I received, not so long ago, a letter which read as follows:

Due to the precarious position of the federal government, the latter seems more willing to finally increase the old age pension. Mr. Lalonde talks about substantial increases, and we elderly people wonder if at last the old people will be able to receive at least the minimum recommended by the Royal Inquiry Commission on Poverty.

It is not possible, you will understand, for three persons, namely the father and the mother and a 17-year old student to get along with \$170 per month. Besides this amount, there is a monthly allowance of \$26 which is being paid by the Social Welfare which is far from being assured and which may be withdrawn at any time.

Mr. Lambert, you are aware that human beings need to have their needs satisfied adequately before wondering whether the money controllers will agree. If money is scarce, bread should be provided first and then games which have no priority. We, the aged citizens with family obligations, are asking why we are rationed because, indeed, getting these meagre pensions is actually like being rationed and if there is to be rationing, then everybody should be and not only the elderly persons. If you could, Mr. Lambert, you should require that the bill on old age pensions be introduced in priority and if Mr. Barrett, Premier of British Columbia is in a position to give \$200 per month to his older citizens, why could we not do the same in Ottawa?

And it is signed: A lady from Sainte-Justine, Mrs. Antoinette Blanchette.

Mr. Speaker, I could quote scores of other letters which are saying the same things, requesting their representatives to pass their message on to Parliament. If we receive such letters, discard them and fail to draw the attention of the government on them, people will come to detest their politicians even more and will say: We pay them for nothing; they cannot render justice where it is due.

That is the reason why I kept those letters and I used my privileges today, those that I still have, to give those examples and to ask once again the government to take action before it is too late.

So, Mr. Speaker, I shall not bother the house with all these letters, but at all events I wanted to show and prove that people aged 60 and more need the old age security pension, and this is not a whim, it is an acquired right. I know however that young couples with children tell us: You only talk about old age pension. There are young people who study. There are young people in the province, there are young people in our constituencies. What about family allowances? Of course, everything will be looked after in due course. They speak this way, however. They are the couples with children or couples who would like to have some. They tell us rightfully that family allowances should be increased substantially.

I am keeping in mind the statement made by the minister before the Committee on Health, Welfare and Social

Old Age Security Act

Affairs that he will in the near future, after consultations with the provinces, bring in legislation to this effect.

I very much hope that at that time the government will bring in legislation that will be generous enough to spare us the need to propose amendments to try and have the rights of these Canadian families better recognized.

It is disturbing, Mr. Speaker, to note that in our country and more particularly in the province of Quebec, which has always had the highest birth rate, the province has had the lowest rate for the past two years.

And when the family allowance plan was established under legislation in 1945, there were people from the English provinces who said that this legislation would be profitable to the province of Quebec. Now, according to the budget tabled in the House a few days ago, it is seen that the largest estimates for family allowances will go to the province of Ontario during the next fiscal year. That goes to show the importance of adjusting our social measures to current needs and actual requirements, so as to further encourage our young people to fulfill their mission, as the people of 60 years old and over have done in the past. Therefore I wish that this legislation will soon be presented to the House.

In concluding my remarks, I say that I am already convinced that certain government members will say that the proposal I just made would cost hundreds of millions of dollars to the federal Treasury. We know that, we are not stupid; we know that it is going to cost a lot. The important thing is to know that with that money, older people and young couples will be able to get the things they need.

But the problem does not lie there. If old age security pensions and family allowances were to be increased as I just proposed, will older people and young couples with children have enough money to buy whatever is required, to satisfy the needs of their family?

Mr. Chairman, in concluding my remarks, I should like to invite the hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde)—even if our standing orders do not allow it, he can take the liberty to do so since he is a minister of the Crown—to give his opinion on that question. A few minutes ago, I heard the words "Crown" and "Governor General". At least, I know the hon. minister of National Health and Welfare very well. I trust him and I hope that, during this session, he will be able to introduce a new bill to improve the lot of senior citizens, so that in 1973 the fact may be recognized that our old age security pensioners will become eligible at age 60 as well as their spouses even if they have not yet reached that age. This would still be more beneficial.

Therefore, I thank the House for listening to my comments. I have tried in a very objective way to thoroughly examine the problem and I have tried to avoid political partisanship, even though I wanted to make a few points at the beginning of my remarks. Therefore, I am convinced that, in the future, whenever somebody speaks about human misery and poverty in this House nobody will be accused of harboring any wrong intention and that we will all work together in order to find a solution to this problem and establish a just society in Canada.