

accounted for. This can easily drain their retirement savings, if they have any, and as a result many seniors end up being the responsibility of the other spouse or some overworked social worker.

For many seniors as they go beyond the 65 year mark their medical expenses in ratio to their income rises far beyond their ability to maintain anything human in lifestyle.

It is inevitable that all people will eventually need some form of medical attention as they grow older. However, when the cost of this required attention becomes so burdensome that their overall financial freedom and quality of life are reduced, the so-called golden years become bitter tears.

Added to this indignity, the Income Tax Act in its present form drops an extra load on them by not allowing adequate concession to deduct their medical expenses.

As has been stated by my hon. colleagues, the allowable limit on the medical exemption tax credit is the lesser of either 3 per cent of net income or \$1,614. This means that the cash outlay for seniors up to this amount is taxed as part of their incomes.

This should not be. We should be giving every consideration to retired Canadians, especially those who have had the misfortune of falling prey to a disability.

Technology kept in its rightful place is a wonderful thing. It has allowed individuals to progress from castor boards to modern electric wheelchairs. Microelectronics now allow hearing impaired individuals to do away with listening horns and progress to highly advanced optometry. All of these aids cost money. One of the beneficiaries of this great technology is the disabled senior but as it presently stands many cannot afford these technology products.

A Statistics Canada survey on senior's health and limitations says that 8 per cent of disabled seniors who require mobility aids do not have them, 31 per cent who require hearing aids do not have them, 10 per cent of those requiring visual devices do not have them. The reason is financial cost.

The income of many disabled seniors is low. Sixty per cent of seniors with disabilities have an average income of less than \$10,000. Many simply do not have the money for medical prescriptions or appliances for their needs.

We must remember that these people are the ones who built this country with their ingenuity and labour, who fought our wars and who endured hardships in the darkest times. They are parents, school teachers, doctors and neighbours.

### *Private Members' Business*

Jimmy Carter, former President of the United States, defined the quality of a nation: "A strong nation, like a strong person, can afford to be gentle, firm, thoughtful and restrained".

There have been many comments from Canadians in recent years over the faceless and heartless form of government. We have been accepting of the norm and we are tolerant. I do not wish to see this Liberal government remembered as a faceless or heartless government. We must move back toward the gentler, thoughtful and restrained days of the Government of Canada they have known before these present years. Our firmness will not be lost. We are a strong a nation. We can afford to show our elderly consideration.

What this bill is about is the cost of taxation that is too high to a particular sector of society which has a low ability to pay. This is inequitable. It is also very unfair. What this bill is about is putting fairness in the Income Tax Act for our disabled seniors. What this amendment does is allow all medical expenses to be deductible for disabled seniors.

Recently I received a letter from a couple in my riding who are in the position of many disabled seniors across this country. They wrote to me and I telephoned them to get permission to read a little of their letter:

Dear Mrs. Brushett,

I am writing on behalf of my husband and myself to express our concern for the government's proposed changes to social programs such as old age assistance. Our concern is for people like ourselves who are trying to live on fixed incomes, pay our usual living expenses, buy prescription drugs, walkers, wheelchairs and special devices, some of which we pay taxes on when purchased.

While we realize something must be done about the deficit, the answer is not with people who don't have much of a chance of helping themselves.

When we talked to Mr. and Mrs. Tower of Amherst, Nova Scotia, they said "We are getting by. We are able to make do. We do not have much left but we are able to make do".

• (1935)

This bill would allow eligible medical expenses from the first dollar to be effectively income tax deductible. This bill would help people like the Towers of Amherst, Nova Scotia.

We have the opportunity as a government to exhibit strength of character and to make adjustments for those in this country who need it most. We cannot let this issue die only to be brought forward again in the future by those who may not see particularly as clearly as we do today.

Finally, I wish to re-emphasize that Bill C-282 is going to effect the people who need it most. It will not be a set of statistical data sitting on a storage shelf collecting dust. It will not help the research notes of political science students. It will