

Suggested Pension Payment Corrections

enough for the government to say that this is the best of all possible worlds and theirs is the best of all political parties. Members still wish to speak on this subject. I rose tonight in response to the challenge put forward by the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. Badanai) and the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher). I regret that neither of them saw fit to remain in the house long enough to hear an attempt to answer the questions that they raised.

We in this party will continue to urge upon hon. members and the government that we should do justice to our people and should not, because of callousness or inefficiency, hide behind the phrase that we cannot afford it. We in Canada can afford anything that we wish to afford.

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that his party believed that all tariffs should be removed. Would he include in that observation the shoe industry and the textile industry?

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Speaker, if somebody paid more attention to the problems of our industry—it is possible to move in a more intelligent direction with intelligent assistance to our industry—we could live in a society that did not have a single tariff.

An hon. Member: There is some jargon for you.

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, in the few moments left in this debate, I would like to congratulate my colleague for introducing this motion. I am sure that every member of this house should take off his hat to the hon. member for standing up and saying what he has said. It amazes me when I hear the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) stand up once again to defend the "haves" and say, in effect, to hell with the "have nots". If we look around this country we will find that five million Canadians in the low income or poverty group are living in what is virtually a hell trying to get along in a society from which they receive very little. In these circumstances, I am greatly surprised at the attitude of hon. members opposite who criticize the line taken by this group in seeking to help them. It is incorrect to say that this country cannot afford the measure of support to which these people are entitled. I am sure that when he comes to read tomorrow, in *Hansard*, what he said tonight, the hon. member for Bruce will wonder what the people back home will have to say about his

remarks, particularly those living on old age pensions.

• (9:50 p.m.)

There is one other point I wish to raise. It is well known that senior citizens trying to live on an inadequate income regularly lose their homes because of their inability to pay property taxes. Surely, in this age of rapid communications and computers there is a method by which education costs can be deducted from property taxes. As it is, senior citizens are losing the shelter they have known, in some cases, for their entire lives. Even though this is a provincial responsibility, the senior government could surely lead the way to ensuring that education tax is removed from municipal property in cases such as I have mentioned. This would reduce taxation by at least 50 per cent.

The hon. member for Bruce suggested that hon. members of this group want a heaven on earth. Mr. Speaker, this very government could create a situation which would make our people proud to be Canadians. Unhappily, no real attempt is being made to improve the lot of the unfortunate in our society. Surely, every member of this house feels ashamed when he goes out into his riding and is brought into contact with the effects of poverty in this modern age.

I say the government should cease to sit on its hands. It should get out and do something of which everyone could be proud. I maintain that the minister could really do something about this if he were sufficiently determined. Enough research has been done to justify an increase in the pensions of our senior citizens. The hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) has ably shown that this country can afford increases in the pensions not only of our senior citizens but also in those of retired civil servants and of others who do not get a fair share of the wealth this country produces.

Not too long ago, Mr. Reuben Baetz, Executive Director of the Canadian Welfare Council, spelled out clearly what was needed when he stated:

If the just society is ever to be anything more than a meaningless and flimsy abstraction, it must be based on certain fundamental rights, including social as well as civil and political rights.

We heard the hon. member for Bruce say a while ago that the Liberals were about to bring the just society into being. We have heard ministers say in answer to questions that an announcement can be expected soon. Well, if we are really to have a just society,