

of indexing which should have come forward. With respect to the 5 per cent in 1984, it is very much an unknown.

We have seen the inability of two Ministers of Finance to really come to grips with the problems this country is facing. While the whole interest rate issue is designed by Government, various Members on the Government side are always trying to say: "Well, it is the international scene; there is nothing we can do. It is the United States, Europe and Japan". However, the House of Commons and the Government do have control over interest rates. They have control over the Governor of the Bank of Canada and interest rates could have been rolled back; but it was a depression by Government design. High interest rates simply squeezed consumers. They could not borrow or get loans. They had to refinance mortgages. Rents went up. All kinds of problems were shot into the structure of the Canadian economy. Taking in closure, taking in the fact that there is no Liberal sending out signals as to why this is so good, leaving it up to the Opposition to point out why it is bad, it really leaves a vacuum out there for the elderly in terms of assessing why Bill C-131 is being brought in.

The biggest loss is the kind of trust which Parliament has lost over time. Members of Parliament and members of legislatures are next to convicted sex killers in terms of having the lowest level of respect and support of any group within Canadian society. If we consider trust, how can the elderly, those now over the age of 65, put any trust in Government? What will come next? In the next two years, each of them will have \$300 taken away. What will happen a few more years down the road?

In any critical assessment of what has happened in the last 31 or 32 years of pensions in this country, one finds that there is a watermark close to each election. I would not doubt that some time in 1984 the Government will make some kind of an announcement that pensions will go up. Then we will have pension reform and the green paper will be reactivated. We saw this in 1971, right before the 1972 federal election.

**Mrs. Mitchell:** Set-ups.

**Mr. Fulton:** We know what the Liberals are up to in terms of their set-ups and strategies to keep the elderly and workers in this country confused.

Concerning trust, how can those who are in their late fifties or sixties plan? The whole pension scheme is very much an unknown. To give an example, if hospitals are suddenly short of beds, or if there are line-ups of people because there is a sudden wave of sickness in Smithers, Vancouver or Ottawa, the first thing the hospital administration does is not to close the hospital or to limit the number of beds, although that is certainly something promoted by certain people in our society. However, when we really need an inflation net, when we really need something in relation to the Consumer Price Index, whether it is in relation to the Unemployment Insurance Fund or pensions, and when the Government gets a little sticky for cash, from whom does it take it? It takes it from those who are the least able to organize. Big business has full-time lobbyists

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here in Ottawa. If the Government tried to take money away from big business, there would be all kinds of chaos and hell to pay. However, since it is going against pensioners all across Canada, many of them living in rural areas with insufficient income to get together and organize and to come in a mass lobby to Ottawa, they are the ones who get their teeth kicked out. They are the ones, as the Tory Member said, who get jackbooted and blackjacked first by the Government.

What about Dome? The Government gave over \$500 million to Dome. The whole contract was based on high interest rates, cost of living increases and the Consumer Price Index. All of these things are done by economists to protect a big corporation like Dome which really should not have that kind of protection.

The Government poured \$100 million into Consolidated Computers here in Ottawa and then tossed it up for auction and received \$100,000 for it. The same amount, \$100 million, was thrown away on a poorly assessed and analyzed Government enterprise. That money, which could have gone to pensioners, was thrown away instead.

When Bill C-131 is implemented after closure, perhaps after an amendment or two, what will happen? The Liberal Party, on its own Richter scale of misery, will have gone up again. The Liberals are once again the ones who are going after those who can least afford it and have the least capability of fighting back.

In relation to the pensioners, the first step will be a net income reduction in benefits for the first two years, 1983 and 1984. Second, if full indexation is restored—we do not know whether or not it will be but I am sure that will be tied to some kind of an election promise in the next election campaign—those pensioners will never be able to regain in terms of indexation what they lose in these next two years. There are over one million Canadians, more than half of them women, who will be affected by this Bill. They will have a reduced income based simply on the Government's own figures, not on the figures of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) which have been jiggery-pokery in one way or another. They have been calculated to be a net loss of \$300 to pensioners during 1983 and 1984 for those getting OAS only, and \$604 in the following two years, as a result of rendering the regular formula of indexation worthless. The total loss over the next four years is going to be in the neighbourhood of \$900.

• (1250)

I can speak certainly for the elderly in my constituency, the Queen Charlotte Islands, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Kitimat, Hazelton, Smithers and on up to the Yukon, representing many native villages where there are many, elderly people. In Cassiar, Atlin and Good Hope Lake, and a number of very small communities, there are elderly but no homes for the elderly, unlike most cities across Canada. There are no special services, there are no Meals on Wheels for many of them.