

tomorrow". What is the government going to do for these people?

I want to quote a case of a man who is now in the grey area about which I have been talking. He cannot qualify for a supplement. He has a few perpetual bonds. At the time he purchased the bonds, he was earning \$24 a week, a good salary in those days. He worked six days a week. Today, his weekly salary of \$24 would be less than a day's pay, yet the government has the gall to try and redeem these bonds at 39 cents on the dollar. What will 39 cents buy with today's soft money? If the minister will figure it out, he will see that it will purchase less than 15 per cent in housing and food. This is how the senior citizens have been treated over the years. Is it any wonder many of them sit in solitude wondering about the next handout, the misery, and what they will have to do without until the next handout comes along.

The minister boasts about increasing the single pension from \$170 to \$178.16 and from \$324.60 to \$341.80 for a married couple. However, he forgets that a bachelor apartment costs \$125 per month or more. This leaves a little over \$50 per month for boots, clothes and food. The minister also conveniently forgets—and I receive many letters on this point—that in the case of couples when one or the other dies, more often the man first the \$324.60, now promised to be \$341.80, scant enough to pay apartment rent of \$150, leaving \$175 for food, clothes—and so on is reduced and whoever is left finds himself in dire straits with just \$28 a month for food, clothes and accessories. This is a sad hour for reflection by many who made this country, and made it work with toil, sweat and tears. I should like to ask the minister why he did not do something about this basic problem. These people have to break up their little homes and try to get a one-room establishment in order to cut down on rent and make ends meet. Nothing whatever has been done for these people.

● (1550)

How about the chronically ill people—I have asked this question before—on old age pensions who are trying to live out a daily existence, unwell and needing a little more help because of chronic illness? They are kept surviving at home out of the hospital. The cost of medication is expensive for everyone, but it is doubly expensive for those on low incomes. I should like to ask the minister what in the world he was thinking when he allowed these people to be entirely neglected, as he has over the years since medicare was brought in. The minister knows as well as I that Mr. Justice Hall in his report on medicare recommended that pharmacare services should be included. This has never been done.

This government brought in medicare but nothing has been done for the old age pensioners who are chronically ill, living out of the hospital and not able to buy the drugs they require to continue living out. I suggest that it is penny wise and pound foolish the way national medicare is operated across Canada today. If the minister would sit on a commission to investigate how medicare is operating he would soon find that out for himself.

No consideration has been given to those who are ill and need lifesaving medication. The minister knows as well as I that at age 60 you have four times the amount of illness

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and hospitalization than you have at age 40. Surely this is a burning question that requires consideration on his part.

This government reminds me of those people who drop dimes in the beggar's cup as they pass by. They do this through compassion but they do not think about the problems of the beggar. Basically the minister has done little or nothing for the old age pensioner who is surely entitled to have his pension adjusted to the increase in the cost of living every three months. As a matter of fact, many taxpayers are required to pay their taxes as I stated earlier to the revenue department on a quarterly basis.

This bill is an empty shell. The minister years ago should have given the old age pensioner enough to live on by raising the basic pension to meet the inflationary dollar situation. The basic old age pension should be at least sufficient to provide housing. With the inflation which has existed for the last 10 years under Liberal government the majority of old age pensioners have been left with less than enough on which to exist. At this time only 40 per cent of those over 65 years of age do not receive the supplement, and about half of those in the 40 per cent group have to scrimp and suffer untold hardship to make ends meet. This is why the basic old age pension should be raised and why drugs should be covered under drugcare, or at least those on doctors' prescriptions. What has been done is a little whitewash job to cover the sins of omission in respect of the treatment of old age pensioners.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, while I was listening to the hon. member who has just completed his speech I found running through my mind the words of one of the hymns of my childhood. I think they describe very well our view of this legislation. The words are:

Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need,
Mercy drops 'round us are falling,

But for the showers we plead.

We get mercy drops from this government, and this legislation is one of those mercy drops for the elderly people of this country. But what we need are showers, or even a first-class thunderstorm, when it comes to providing security for the elderly people. Of course, we welcome these mercy drops, but they are not adequate in themselves to provide security in this day of increasing prices and living costs.

Yesterday my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), pointed out that the old age security pension has never been raised except in response to pressures of various kinds. As a matter of fact it was pressure at the beginning that brought old age pensions into being, pressure which finally became overwhelming throughout the country. I well remember the fact that young families frequently had to take their parents to court and have the court declare that they were unable economically to support their elderly parents before they could get any form of relief. It was that type of thing at the end of the First World War that finally resulted in the first old age pension legislation. Ever since that time we have had a stiff and bitter fight for every single improvement. The pressure has been economic and political, and has been brought to bear by groups of various kinds. I