

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

THE BUDGET

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West) (page 5051).

Mrs. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker, when the House adjourned at six o'clock I was about to read from a letter dated February 12 which I received from Vancouver. I want to read the letter because it is typical of so many that I have received from people on old age pension, from families of veterans, from people on low incomes with large families, and generally from people in difficult circumstances. The letter reads as follows:

I'm now 75 years of age and have to live on the supplementary pension of between \$110 to \$111. The landlord or caretaker has been putting the rent up and up for a tiny room,—and now it's a case of having a place to sleep but almost nothing to eat!

Have fought a heart condition and other ailments on my own for a long time—

Over 50 years ago I came from Scotland—then returned to stay in London during the last world war. My wages or salary when I worked were poor—so try as I did I couldn't save but very, very little. I heard that we'd be getting more money—up to \$150.

She is referring here to the budget.

If this were so, I could manage very well indeed—but if it isn't, I thought I'd write the proper people in Scotland and see if it would be cheaper to spend the remaining years of my life there—

I am not a businesswoman and the sight of a form fills me with terror! And how I detest having to write and ask for more—too many already do this—

This is the letter of a self-respecting person who has spent many of her years in Canada and who now is hesitant to ask for what is her right if the government were doing the proper thing, that is, seeing to it that her old age is spent comfortably. But the answer of the government to this is a deaf ear.

A few days after this letter was written my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) asked the government for the one hundredth time whether they would consider some emergency measure to aid the pensioners before many thousands

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of them are starved out of existence. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) sat silent and made no attempt to answer the question. Then my colleague asked if there would be any action on behalf of old age pensioners during this parliamentary session. He received the reply we have received so many times, that this matter would be dealt with as part of the over-all review of the social security program. This is what we get all the time.

There is nothing whatsoever in sight for the people in this country whose incomes have shrunk progressively as the cost of living has gone up, and the people in whose homes there is fear because of increasing unemployment and what it means to their young people and more especially to the breadwinner. What is the answer of the government? Again I should like to quote from the *Globe and Mail* of March 16, where the Minister of Finance is reported as having said the following quite clearly:

This is a period when we need to sit tight for a few months and see what the results of actions we have taken will be.

It is extremely callous and cruel of this government to invite old ladies such as the one whom I quoted, and veterans such as the one who wrote to me, to sit tight for a few months and wait to see what happens.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. MacInnis: This is a sit tight budget, in the words of the minister himself. It is a budget that dooms to despair the dispossessed people of this country and encourages the process of despoiling them. Meanwhile, to take their minds off their misery the government has devised something else, that is, to continue with the shining farce of a Prime Minister like a glowing star in the firmament who can be watched by people who try to identify with him. It is an exciting spectacle, the government hopes, and one that will be durable.

It is exciting to see a Prime Minister who can divide his Christmas holiday between scuba diving in the West Indies and skiing in the Alps, and to hell with the people. It is exciting to watch a Prime Minister who can keep up all these indubitably important athletic events and show his great prowess leaping with both feet off the ground to astound the Eskimos and Indians and all other people wherever he goes, a Prime Minister who can spend his time girl-watching in the House of Commons gallery, mixing with the stars both