

security recipient, because she is not 65 or he is not 65, should not be entitled to an allowance. Surely, here is an area where we can move to correct that one injustice. There are many couples who are living on the single pension, simply because one or other has not reached the age of 65.

There are now in Canada some organizations of senior citizens, and I think we should look to them for leadership. They are the ones who know. The National Pensioners and Senior Citizens met in Charlottetown not long ago. They showed their great wisdom in the choice of the convention site. They brought forward some very interesting suggestions as to how their lot might be improved. I am sure that their suggested pension was not \$100. I do not know whether the minister got their letter or not; they actually suggested \$150. They mentioned some of the things that have already been discussed here. They felt, and I can understand why, that the cost of drugs was excessive and they made suggestions for plans whereby the older people could travel in Canada at a cheaper rate in the off season. Another suggestion was that a period of grace be extended to people in straightened circumstances in the OAS group upon the demise of either spouse, in consideration of the heavy expenses incurred at such a time. It would not cost a fortune to enact any of these things and they are the kinds of things that would indicate a constant awareness of the needs of senior citizens and a flexibility in attitude as well as a degree of compassion, showing that the government cares for those who have made the country what it is.

Another subject on which I have had many letters is the problem faced by our older citizens when they get an increase and some landlord grabs it. That is outrageous, especially when it happens in those institutions which are supported by federal and other governments.

• (1640)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macquarrie: I remember some old men telling me that the increase is so devoured that they did not even have enough to buy an extra pouch of tobacco.

There are so many areas of concern, Mr. Speaker, so many areas for improvement, I just want to say that we welcome this measure of justice; we support it but this party has no intention of entering the auction room. We are not going to go about the land with great bids for particular support. It little profits to bid \$150 and accept \$100—you would never get away with that at Sotheby's.

We are not going to make preposterous promises because we happen to be led by a man who is responsible at all times and who has no intention of moving the power by the preposterous bribes that glitter for the moment and then are gone from reality. We also are led by a man who, before too long, will be in office.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macquarrie: We are not going to trifle with the real needs of the senior citizens of this country for the ersatz satisfaction of trying to gain a few more votes at election time. We will tell the senior citizens of this country that what Canada needs today is a government of competence,

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a government that can manage the country and its affairs, a government that can and will do something about this eternal and infernal unemployment which is ruining this land.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macquarrie: Canada needs a government that will do more than say that the defeat of inflation is around the corner, which we have gone around eight times and it is still there.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macquarrie: The first need of the land is to have a government with competence, a government which will not have to put so much of the nation's wealth into unemployment insurance. It is not unemployment insurance that is our burden, it is unemployment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macquarrie: That is the problem. That is why so many of the government's programs which the minister mentioned today have to be left in the cupboard. With efficient administration, with competent government, we will provide the people of this country with the kind of meaningful, compassionate administration in the areas that we talk about. It is not going to be just glittering promises; we can assure them that it will have real purpose, that this will be a better land and a better governed land. That is the future I see for this country and especially the older people, and I invite them to look forward to it, as I do, with eager anticipation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I confess that on entering this debate this afternoon my mind goes back a number of years. We have before us a bill which makes the basic amount of the old age pension \$100 a month. I am not even an old age pensioner yet—I am only 64. But when I first came here, Mr. Speaker, a little over 30 years ago—

An hon. Member: My God!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): —the old age pension was only \$20 a month. Not only was it so small an amount but it was payable only at age 70 and it had attached to it a means test which said that no person could be on the old age pension and have a total income of more than \$365 a year. That was the standard for the people on the old age pension when I first came here—\$1 a day.

Just to be sure that my recollections are correct, last evening I checked the *Hansards* of the first year or two that I was a member of this House. It is there on the record; one of the battles that I got into right away was that of trying to get that pension of \$20 a month raised to \$30 a month. Imagine that—asking for a pension of \$30 a month! The question came back from the other side, just as it is coming now from Little Sir Echo behind me, where will the money come from?