

The Budget—Mr. La Salle

tives, the government could obtain wise advice likely to help it establish an efficient and valuable policy for the future of our country.

Of course, I should like to declare myself very pleased with the improved social measures announced in the budget speech. As concerns the increased old age security basic pension, I have been hearing about that for a long time. I shall not say that the government has imagined or devised something new when it increased the old age security pensions.

Anyway, we should honestly rejoice at the government's positive answer to past representations.

However, for a few minutes, I should like to discuss briefly the problem thereby created for the province of Quebec. As a representative of the province of Quebec, I believe that it is only normal that I should stress, among other things, the reaction of the Quebec Social Affairs minister or of the Quebec cabinet. It has been suggested that Quebec might find this legislation unsatisfactory. One would have to be quite naïve to believe that the Quebec Minister of Social Affairs was dissatisfied to find that the government was increasing the old age security pensions.

• (1550)

The Quebec government deplored that it was not warned of this measure. I submit that we should consider the Quebec context and the objective of the Minister of Social Affairs who wrote a book on Quebec social policy. This book was written ten years ago and the minister is most anxious to implement this Quebec program of social policy.

It should also be recognized that Quebec is in a rather peculiar situation. In fact, I wonder whether all hon. members are as convinced of that as I am. I think that under those circumstances, the Minister of Social Affairs is quite justified in insisting on a typically Quebec social policy for Quebecers and with Quebecers without being necessarily isolated from the rest of Canada.

In my opinion, Mr. Castonguay was quite right in deploring that the government failed to inform him about the passing of this legislation because he was thus obliged to consider the Quebec social policy in relation to different classes of people and that, simultaneously, the Quebec provincial budget was affected in the area of social policy.

I think that this explanation was necessary. I also believe that Quebec members are perfectly aware of the Quebec situation. They recognize the arguments put forward by the Quebec Minister of Social Affairs. Perhaps they simply need a little more courage to agree with me.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would add that everyone in Quebec is happy that the old age pension has been increased.

Starting July 1, 1972, the government will increase from \$650 to \$1,000 the special exemption for persons aged 65 and over.

Mention should also be made of the special exemption of \$50 per month for trainees and full time students attending courses prescribed by educational or training institutions.

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Moreover, medical expenses are enlarged, for tax purposes, as from January 1, 1972.

No doubt that these special measures provided in the budget are beneficial and welcome. Thus, the changes relating to tax reform are, to a certain extent, very interesting and the economic outlook for next year, to which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) has referred, is very bright. Shall we have to wait until the end of the year to see that the economic outlook has been thoroughly considered and that it reflects what is in store for us?

I do not hesitate to say that the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance is most acceptable. But is it enough to rectify the situation? Are the credits provided sufficient to lead us to believe that within the next ten months or the next year, the rate of unemployment will be reduced to a normal level? Will it be possible to generate enough jobs to meet the needs of the manpower entering the labor market every year, in June, and to create the social climate we are hoping for? I doubt it very much and this is why I took the liberty of making some suggestions.

We have heard about the increase of the old age security pension payable at 65. Some of my colleagues who have spoken about it, and myself, have been wishing for a long time now that the qualifying age be reduced to 60. I must repeat, even though I have already said it and it has been suggested to me, that this suggestion was very interesting. Yet, in the budget, my proposal of bringing down to 60 the age of eligibility to the old age security pension, since, according to statistics, there would be in Canada from 350,000 to 400,000 persons aged from 60 to 65, went unanswered.

In view also of the fact that there are about 600,000 unemployed, it would be very interesting, in a year from now, to be able to put on pension persons aged from 60 to 65, in order to give work to 400,000 unemployed.

I think that this pension of \$285 for a couple is inadequate in several cases. We should, once again, consider seriously the possibility of increasing this pension to at least \$350 a month for a couple, because I do not think, considering the increase of the cost of living, that we can give these aged people a well deserved rest, an adequate income enabling them to feel happy and say that their country has done something for them, which would create by the same token about 400,000 new jobs.

In my opinion, we would promote a better social atmosphere, by granting our older people a well-deserved rest—since they have been on the labour market for about 40 years—and by providing about 350,000 to 400,000 young people with a job, a responsibility as well as a suitable salary.

Thus, we would have put things back in the right place, we would have given work to young people between 20 and 30 years of age, and well-deserved holidays to people of 60. Therefore, we would develop a most human policy, since we all know that in industry, for instance, machinery is increasingly important, while the person is less and less important.

Mr. Speaker, I really hope that through perseverance, we might get some results. I say so because the hundreds of letters received from people in my riding always emphasize their support for this kind of policy. We would,