

• (1630)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, who has been given extra time for the interventions earlier in his contribution, but the time allotted to him has expired. It may, however, be extended with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for York South.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, may I thank Your Honour and hon. members for their courtesy, which in this case may be a little more deserved than in other cases where I have had extended time. As I was saying, I wanted to hear what it should be, but I knew that I would not. I am certain that what has been decided to the right of me by the members of the Conservative party is this, that whatever level of income tax reduction is proposed they will say they want more. That is the only decision that they have made.

Mr. Horner: You have never done that.

Mr. Lewis: They have not decided what level of personal income tax is good for the country; the only decision they have made is that whatever is proposed by somebody else, they will say it is not enough. I did not really expect the Leader of the Opposition to tell me what the level would be. I am deliberately not making a budget speech, not even a mini one, because that will come in time. I rose to make it clear that we supported the government in the miscellaneous estimates committee and during the discussions here on the supplementary estimates before the bill was introduced and that we are going to be consistent throughout and support the bill now.

We are doing this because—and this also applies to the unemployment insurance amendments bill number one—we are determined that the unemployed should receive their benefits; that programs like LIP will have enough money to carry on; that the physical fitness program, which the members of the Conservative party also wanted to reduce in amount, will be able to carry on; and that the on-going work of the government and the salaries of civil servants should not be stymied and frustrated purely by political hunger for office. This is why we have consistently supported the supplementary estimates and it is why we support this bill.

May I say to this House what I have said outside it on one or two occasions. If I may speak personally for a moment, I fell in love in my early teens and the girl I fell in love with was silly enough to marry me. We have been married for 37 years now. Therefore, I have not personally experienced the delights and the discomforts of being wooed by more than one suitor at the same time. I am having that experience now. I get a wink from the Prime Minister and a nod from the Leader of the Opposition—if I may add, Mr. Speaker, in both official languages.

Let me repeat what I said during the throne speech debate. As far as we are concerned, we have noted the fact that over the past 15 years since 1957 this country has had five minority governments and only two majority governments. We have noted the fact that there are in Canada now four established political parties. We have

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also noted the fact that the relative percentage of the vote obtained by these parties at election time has been more or less the same. We, therefore, recognize that the likelihood of minority government after an election in this country is greater than the likelihood of majority government.

Under these circumstances, it is our duty—and if Conservatives members of this parliament had any principle other than yearning for office, it would be their duty too—to make this parliament work. This minority government is now chastened and humbled. One almost does not recognize the Prime Minister nowadays when he appears on television. I watched him on television last night and I must say that, although I do not agree with everything that he said, boy, oh boy, did October 30 change that man, at least superficially! I do not know what goes on inside. I am not a psychologist or God and I cannot climb into his mind, but superficially he is certainly a changed man.

My colleagues and I believe that it is possible, if Members of Parliament have regard for Canada and Canadians, instead of playing the political game of office-seeking with tongues hanging out for office, for this parliament to do more for the people of Canada than it has done in the past four and a half years. That is our objective and we intend to stick to that objective despite the hunger that overwhelms me sometimes from members immediately to my right.

Mr. Stackhouse: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member for York South permit a question?

Mr. Lewis: Certainly.

Mr. Stackhouse: Would the hon. member inform the House what he would regard as the minimum figure that his party would settle for as the old age pension of the future?

Mr. Lewis: No, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to inform the hon. member of that. I have not said on television or anywhere else the words that the Leader of the Opposition used last night to the effect that I had made precise numbers known. I did not do that. We have made known to the country and to the old age pensioners of Canada that, in our view, the basic old age pension ought to be at the level of \$150 a month, and we mean it. Now, whether or not that amount of old age pension will be accepted by this parliament is something that we will decide when we see the old age pension bill.

Motion agreed to and bill read the second time.

Mr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find there is agreement in the House that once we go into committee of the whole we stay there during the period normally allotted to private members. If there is such agreement of the House perhaps an order can be made to that effect.

Mr. Nielsen: That is agreeable to us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is so ordered. Perhaps before I leave the chair I might announce the business for ten o'clock. Perhaps it would be agreeable that this announce-