

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

increase is not as expansionary and should increase by roughly 12 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the Prairie region of which Manitoba forms a part has been considerably less affected by unemployment than other regions of Canada. The seasonally adjusted rate for the Prairies for April was 4.3 per cent, compared to 6.7 per cent nationally, 8.1 per cent for the Atlantic region, 8.4 per cent for Quebec, 5.7 per cent for Ontario and 7.6 per cent for British Columbia.

While we would certainly not minimize the efforts of any provincial government toward the reduction of unemployment, we are constrained to note the very favourable trend existing in Manitoba which also pertains to the other provinces in the Prairie region where governments do not admit to the hon. member's political persuasion. All these governments are to be congratulated.

THE BUDGET—REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION OF
CIRCUMSTANCES OF ELDERLY RETIRED PEOPLE

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, June 2, I asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) the following question:

Will he assure us that some regard will be had for the circumstances of the elderly retired on fixed incomes in his presentation to us on June 18?

The minister replied:

Mr. Speaker, we always do our best to look after the old people.

Faced with an answer like that, any sensible person would be frightened to death. I could only do one thing and that was to go for the jugular, which happens to be this inspired part of the evening on the late, late show. Here we are, and I am rising to suggest—I hope this question will be received by the parliamentary secretary—that one is frightened about discrimination against elderly people. I have in mind those who are not able to tackle inflation by the sweat of their brow, so to speak, because they are no longer at the point where they can effectively work and earn that extra wherewithal to deal with inflation.

I know of a situation which is really only partly the fault of the Department of Finance. It involves an old gentleman in his mid-eighties who was receiving the old age guaranteed supplement and also war veterans allowance. Thanks to the computerized formula, he receives \$5 less per month although he and his wife receive a little more income. This is how things work in the computer age. When you are in your mid-eighties you will find yourself taking home less pay to feed yourself and your wife even though the family income is greater. This is a blight on the human spirit. This gentleman is quite depressed about how the computer age has treated him. I just draw that matter to the attention of the parliamentary secretary.

My main point this evening is an argument for higher exemptions in two different directions. The mail I get, like the mail which I believe is received by other hon. members, suggests that if there is one area of tax reform which we should look after it is higher exemptions for those on fixed incomes, particularly old age pensioners. I do not think there is any question about this. Out of every 10 letters I receive on the subject, nine are in that vein. The tenth usually deals with an esoteric subject such as capital gains.

If my experience is typical, and I have reason to think it is, this is the area in which the minister has to do his work well on June 18 or we will face some kind of a revolution by the aged of this country. There must be lower taxes for the fixed income, retired group. This can be done in several ways. There could be increased exemptions for all. I have argued previously—I note this in passing since my time is running short—that there should be correlation of a pretty relevant kind between increased exemptions and the poverty level, probably a double exemption for each individual.

● (10:20 p.m.)

The second point is that we should give an increased exemption to the elderly, say in the amount of \$1,000 instead of the \$500 they now enjoy, because they have expenses which most of us who are younger do not have. They have expenses in respect of medicines, diet, furniture and accommodation because some of them are in wheelchairs and cannot live in walk-up accommodation. I believe these two points should be borne in mind.

Finally, as my third point I would say it may be there should be a combination of an extra exemption for everybody and an additional exemption for old age pensioners. I place this upon the shoulders of the parliamentary secretary who I know will draw my point to the attention of the Minister of Finance. In brief, because I am dealing with the elderly since they have extra costs and are not able to fight against insidious inflation, I would hope the Minister of Finance on June 18, when he stands in his place in a House much more full than it is at the present time, would convey good news to our older citizens.

Mr. P. M. Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is very well aware that questions regarding the content of the forthcoming budget cannot be answered at this time. Representations in this particular area have been received and the minister is aware of the various points of view and representations, including those expressed by the hon. member. I am afraid no further response is possible at this time.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.