

price, rate or fee increases. Employees, whether unionized or not, seek and usually gain wage increases which take inflation into account. But now the Government expects pensioners to accept something dangerously close to a freeze in their incomes at a time when inflation continues to cut in half the real buying power of the dollar every five years.

In my Province of Prince Edward Island, the price of home heating oil soared from 74.2 cents a gallon in 1979 when the Conservative Government was in office to \$1.47 a gallon today. In my Province the price of electricity is the highest in the country. In the average household on P.E.I., it has gone from \$33.84 a month to \$53.76 a month, compared with only \$12.15 a month in Calgary, in the same three-year period. Gasoline has leaped from \$1.26 a gallon to \$2.40 a gallon. Increases in prices of even locally-produced foodstuffs in the Province of Prince Edward Island—from eggs to fish to potatoes to fresh milk—have been stratospheric.

If current pensions are allowed to shrink in real value with each passing year, how are the people on Prince Edward Island, and other people across the country, to cope? Even the most optimistic independent analysts do not expect inflation to abate in the next two years to anything like the Pollyanna levels forecast by the Government.

The irony is that in a misguided effort to free up money for new job-creation programs, a commendable goal but misguided in execution, the Government may well be making the employment problem worse by its six and five program. Some retirees faced with deteriorating pensions are being forced back into the labour market merely to make ends meet. In the process, job opportunities which would otherwise go to younger and less experienced Canadians are being lost to them. This is why I say that, in the final analysis, the Government's six and five program is self-defeating and misguided.

Bill C-133, if passed, will rob the average retired public employee of \$1,200 over the next two years, plunging many of them into real poverty. Some 12 Government Members of Parliament stated publicly that they intended to oppose the legislation. I hope that they will not view the miserly, stingy modifications to the Bill announced by the President of the Treasury Board on Tuesday as sufficient cause to reverse their position. I admire the courage which they have shown to date in opposing their own Government on the question. It is uncharacteristically courageous of them. Public sector employees and retirees in my riding, and in numerous other ridings in which there are sizeable Public Service populations, will watch anxiously as those Members of Parliament vote on every stage of the Bill. For my part I intend to join my Progressive Conservative colleagues in opposing this offensive, invidious legislation.

I urge other Hon. Members to do likewise. If we in the House of Commons, and Senators, all parliamentarians, will not fight for the rights of pensioners, who look to Parliament as their only line of defence against a callous and short-sighted Government, whose cause are we prepared to champion?

#### *Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act (No. 2)*

**Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in the debate this evening on Bill C-133. Basically I should like to speak on five short topics in relation to this Bill. My first point is to state that there is a general feeling that this particular piece of legislation on the part of the Government constitutes an outright theft, something along the lines of a lawyer dipping into trust funds held for the benefit of his clients.

My second point concerns the philosophy of the six and five program which the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) indicated was the underpinning and the rationale for this particular legislation.

My third point is perhaps to analyse some of the arguments put forward by the Liberal Government as a justification for the entire six and five program which led to the Bill before us and the series of Bills which have been before the House recently.

The fourth item with which I would like to deal concerns what I feel is the incredible position of the Conservative Party in doing an enormous sleight of hand trick in this House. The Tories back the six and five legislation. They defeat amendments which would exclude persons from the six and five program, and then the Tories turn around and harp continuously tonight on this position, in opposition to this Bill.

If Hon. Members of the Conservative Party who spoke tonight had in fact taken the 40 minutes to which they were entitled, the implementation of this Bill would have been delayed and certainly more Government Members would have had time to wrestle with their consciences and vote against the legislation.

The fifth point, with which I would like to deal very briefly, is what we in the NDP believe should be done. In addition to defeating this particular Bill the pension question is a very vital one, and this is a pension Bill before us this evening.

It was fairly interesting that, when the Bill was introduced by the President of the Treasury Board on December 6, he made a number of statements to justify the particular legislation. He said that the purpose of the six and five program was to show federal leadership. I would question the kind of leadership that Government is attempting to impose or show. The Government certainly wants economic recovery to come on the backs of working people. The Government has literally removed a right which we believe is a right in a free society—the right to bargain collectively for wages and working conditions. With a stroke of the pen the Government immediately dissolved this right of Public Servants. Further, the Government believes that the six and five program should be enforced on the backs of low and middle income families through the imposition of the capping of indexing of Family Allowances.

I have had constituents come forward lately to talk about soup kitchens. Soup kitchens are becoming a necessity in my riding. Some people regularly use soup kitchens as a source of nutrition. With the very bleak prospects in the forest industry and the economy on the West Coast of Canada, things such as soup kitchens are becoming a hard reality. At one point it was