

some consideration in this respect and will allow me to ask the hon. member one simple question.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member's point is extremely well taken, and I recognize from the smile on the face of the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) that he would welcome the question of the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

I apologize to the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) who will have to be patient a little longer.

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander: This will not take very long, Mr. Speaker. I was very impressed with the hon. member's speech. I think we are all concerned about the plight of our senior citizens who, as I have often said, are the forgotten people of this country. But when we speak of principle, if I recall correctly the hon. member's party had submitted, without any hesitation or reservation, their recommendation for a pension of \$150 a month and had said they would press for it and there would be no withdrawing. I would ask the hon. member how, in heaven's name, anyone can expect credibility after having sold out for a pension of \$100 a month.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. It gives me an opportunity to take a couple of minutes more to refresh the hon. member's memory on the policy of the NDP, which is that an NDP government would immediately implement an old age pension of \$150 a month. In the course of the minority parliament the NDP took the position that we were going to get the most we could possibly get out of whoever was governing. It so happens, unfortunately for the senior citizens, that the most we could get out of anybody in this parliament was \$100 a month from the Liberals. Had the hon. member's party been prepared to go to \$106 a month back in October, by the middle of January they could well have been where the government is.

Mr. Alexander: All I can say is, shame.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: I believe the time has come to hear the words of wisdom from the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert).

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your kind words regarding myself and if wisdom has not touched a person at my age, it never will.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great attention to all the comments made in this House tonight. This does not mean that I accept all the arguments brought forward but, at any rate, I listened to them. I hope that, in turn, my colleagues will listen with patience to the few comments I wish to make on third reading of the bill.

What amazes me is that nearly all members in this House seem to agree that persons aged 60 have rights to increased pensions in order to allow them to live decently and in full security as they so richly deserve. However, we are presently prevented by the Standing Orders from implementing our good ideas.

Old Age Security Act

So I am rather astounded that the Standing Orders should prevent us from reaching the objective we all want to reach. Since our rules in fact prevent us from increasing the credits to meet our senior citizens' needs, I think that this House should at least be left with one role, namely that of drawing the people's needs to the attention of the government, of the Governor General so that the rights of the aged be recognized as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to make a simple remark to my colleague for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) who earlier—injust I think—stated that the Créditiste members wanted to exploit human misery for petty political gains.

I think he did not mean what he said because I have here a report of the recommendations of a senate committee which conducted an investigation throughout the country to see whether there was poverty in Canada and what should be done to alleviate this poverty and establish a better degree of distribution of our wealth to meet the needs of the whole population and not only of two-fifths of it. I think that the senators were not being demagogic; they have found a fact and made recommendations.

I have also here a report published in a newspaper when the Liberal Party said that if they were elected they would establish a just society in Canada. If he wanted to establish a just society, it is because he was aware of some injustice in Canada.

It is precisely to perpetuate injustice when many individuals are left to live in inhuman economic conditions, while Canada can do better. I have also in hand a statement—and not the least—of Mr. Alfred Rouleau of the Desjardins credit unions to the effect that the eradication of poverty is a collective responsibility.

We are here to work together at finding a way to improve those conditions and in order to comply with the standing orders and procedure, we must restrict ourselves to make known, as I said a moment ago, the needs of the people.

If I take part in the debate on the bill concerning old age security, it is to convey the message of the senior citizens who do not have the means to lead a decent life. I suggest that it is inconceivable that in 1973, when the gross national production beats all records, in spite of thousands of unemployed, our country tolerates so much poverty. I am not ashamed of saying it because those are the facts.

Someone said one day that he who robs a man of his clothes shall be called a thief. He who does not cover a man who is naked when he can do so, does he deserve another name? It is not I who said that, but somebody else and I think that he was right.

Thousands of older people really suffer from this inhuman life, put up with a hard life and there is no law to guarantee them a fair and truly social minimum income.

• (2220)

Everybody wants it, we want it, but the procedure is stopping us, and I am anxious to see this elephantine procedure dealt with.

It so happens that there are thousands of couples who have to live on the pension of one spouse. How can one imagine that it is possible for two people to feed them-