

implemented, would cost the national treasury I believe are reasonably accurate. We must remember that this measure would not help those old age pensioners or old people who have little or no income. Some argue that merely because a man reaches 65 or 70 years of age he ought to be entitled to some additional tax exemption. I do not support that contention. Many in this old age group have far higher than average earnings and are well able to pay the taxes demanded of them. Amounts collected from the people who are better off could go towards helping those in the lower income brackets. I submit that many of our difficulties in this field stem from our inadequate and piecemeal welfare programs. If we want to help our underprivileged, surely it would be better to do so by direct assistance rather than by imposing tax exemptions which discriminate against the poor and favour the rich.

Our welfare legislation needs to be thoroughly reviewed if we are to remedy this problem area. I hope the mere fact this notice of motion appears on the order paper will prompt the government to overhaul our existing welfare legislation. I agree that the situation is urgent, but I do not think that adopting this measure is the best or correct way of helping our people. I say that because I do not believe the solution suggested in the resolution will bring about an equitable remedy of this difficult situation.

Mr. H. E. Gray (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I join with hon. members who have spoken in congratulating the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) in bringing forward his notice of motion at this time. His action in doing so is consistent with what I know of his approach to public policy, an approach that is based on concern for people and particularly for those who are in the less advantaged groups.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Watch out! You've had it.

Mr. Gray: Every proposal to change tax law has many implications. In fact, I think we can agree that every proposed change in law creates various effects. To give a proposal of the sort put forward by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce the consideration it deserves would mean discussing it as fully as possible and looking at all the effects created by it.

● (5:50 p.m.)

Let me say at once, Mr. Speaker, this should not necessarily mean that ultimately on balance if it may appear that implementation of such a proposal is the best thing to do under the circumstances, that such a decision should not be made. It may mean rather that if and when such a proposal is put into effect it would be taken with the full knowledge and understanding of all its implications. We must remember that under our rules, whether or not we agree with them in this regard, private members cannot propose bills to change tax laws. Such bills in effect cannot be moved by private members, but instead must be moved by a member of the Privy Council on behalf of the government. This is why if members have proposals of the type put forward by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, under the rules of this house they must present them as he has done in the form of a Notice of Motion.

It is my understanding that if such a motion is adopted by the house it would not have the effect of actually changing the law in the way it proposes. Conversely, if the motion does not happen to come to a vote in the hour set aside for its discussion, that does not mean a change in the law which is considered desirable by some or all members of the house has been defeated or turned aside. It means only that the time set aside for discussion of the proposal in the Notice of Motion has gone by without all those wishing to speak having been heard. At the same time, it does mean that the real purpose of allowing Notices of Motion to be placed on the Order Paper will have been served. This purpose is to enable the mover to present his views to the house, and therefore to the country, and to enable other members to present their own views on his proposal.

One must recognize, Mr. Speaker, there is more to be done for our senior citizens. In recognizing the need for additional action one cannot overlook the steps forward that have been made in the past five years to aid our senior citizens. There have been increases in the basic old age security pension, reduction over a 5 year period of the eligible age to 65, creation of the guaranteed income supplement and for those who have retired since 1966, the creation of the Canada Pension Plan. As I said, there is more to be done for our senior citizens. In my opinion, the proposal in this Notice of Motion is certainly among the measures that are worthy of additional and serious consideration.