

people say: Our taxes are too high; what are you doing for us now? In my view, the maturity of a society can be judged to a large extent by the way in which it looks after its older people. In my sense of priorities in this job I put the older people, combined with those others who cannot look after themselves, at the top of the totem pole because of the contribution some of them have made to the development of this country.

I take this attitude having in mind all they have done for this country, as the hon. member who has just spoken so eloquently reminded us, and because we are not bound to do these things. There is nothing in it for us. I think we reflect honour upon ourselves and upon our country if we forget considerations of our own advantage and take measures to look after those who have contributed to the building up of this country but who can do so little for themselves. Only we can help them.

My second priority is youth. This, I suppose, amounts to selfishness because we always try to manifest our best aspirations through our children. We try to give them the best possible education and the best standard of living we can. As for those of us who have reached, so to speak, a menopausal state—

Some hon. Members: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Danson: —we have our problems in the shape of high taxes, the high cost of living, inflation. These are with us and they will not go away. However, from generation to generation difficulties of one kind or another have always existed. We solve some of them, but not all of them, and as some are disposed of, new ones arise.

The young generation criticizes us for making mistakes, and indeed we have made a great many. The new generation will make mistakes, too. But we can only roll with the times as we see them and do our best. If we are doing less than our best, we ought to be criticized. As far as improving the lot of senior citizens is concerned, people are always willing to do this as long as they are not called upon personally to meet increased taxation. The approach commonly taken is to say: Let us see greater efficiency in Ottawa; let us try to save money and cut down expenditures. I could not agree more. However, in my brief experience of examining estimates for visiting departments, I have found the degree of efficiency or inefficiency is comparable with that to be found in most large corporations. Some departments are more

Suggested Pension Payment Corrections

efficient than others. This is the case in large corporations, too. There is always room for improvement, but I suggest the main savings to be made, if they are to be made, lie in the field of government programs—things we are doing and which we ought not to be doing, or things we are failing to do but which we should be doing.

I wish it were possible to save enough money to meet all our urgent needs without recourse to further taxation. Then, as I go home at weekends and as I pass the liquor stores with their line-ups, I am absolutely amazed. It is as though it were Christmas. This is in an area where people are making good incomes and complaining about high taxes. Our problems are the problems of prosperity. We have too much going for us in this country to be “snowed” by talk of great inefficiencies, that we cannot afford to do this or we cannot afford to do that. We should be ashamed if we cannot do those human things in a civilized society that should be done; and we must help those who cannot help themselves.

● (5:40 p.m.)

This is what we are talking about today. We must look seriously at the problems we face and the problems other people have. I have mentioned before decisions that are made, such as whether to get a colour television set or an extra one for the bedroom; whether to get an extra car or a Ski-doo, or whether to have a Ski-doo for him and a Ski-doo for her. Although these decisions do not confront everybody, they do confront those who pay taxes. It is very easy for me to speak in this way because I do not have a pat solution. But we must face this situation honestly, and not take it out of the hides of older people who cannot defend themselves.

Mr. Melvin McQuaid (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, I am happy indeed to associate myself with the motion and to state unequivocally that I am wholeheartedly behind it. I think the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is to be congratulated for introducing this motion before the house.

I did intend to speak in this debate though I thought I would make my appearance after the supper adjournment. However, I must say I am considerably surprised to note that so far in this debate, in addition to the minister himself, only two members on the government side of the house have seen fit to stand up and support this worth-while