

Members of the house will agree with me that this is hardly a princely sum. The fifth report of the Economic Council of Canada described the poverty in our country as appalling and involving millions of people. At page 105 the council, in discussing the inability of statistics to adequately describe the destruction of spirit that accompanies poverty, reported as follows:

Much more serious and more widespread is the kind of low-income situation that carries with it a sense of entrapment and hopelessness. Even the best statistics can only hint at this. They cannot capture the sour atmosphere of poor health and bad housing—the accumulated defeat, alienation and despair which often so tragically are inherited by the next and succeeding generations.

Here is an example of real poverty right in my own riding, and there are hundreds of others. The Economic Council of Canada report states that any couple receiving less than \$2,500 a year is “existing below the poverty line”, not living. I submit that even if our current legislation had not docked my constituent \$14 per month for 18 months, this couple would still have an annual income of only \$2,329.20. This is hardly a magnificent sum on which to live for a year, and I certainly hope that this kind of stingy treatment that we are according to our senior citizens does not stifle their initiative. They are still well below the poverty line of \$2,500 per year. If it were not for the meagre pension which this particular man has, I am sure he would be a good deal worse off.

In reply to my question the minister stated that the issue I raise relates to one of a number of “anomalies” in the pension legislation. I say it is not just an anomaly, it is a tragedy which allows citizens of a country as rich as Canada to exist on this kind of income and to take no part in the increased standard of living that is available to other Canadians who are organized and articulate. People like veterans and pensioners are unorganized; there is no one to speak for them; they are mute and inarticulate, and therefore they get the rough end of the stick. As the minister said in reply to me on June 14, the government is looking into a number of anomalies in the legislation. I hope this is so because I have much faith in the minister, and I hope he can convince his leader and his cabinet colleagues that this is an important issue with which they should deal immediately.

While we are speaking of anomalies, let me say that there are a number of others, and in the time remaining I would like to outline at least two of them. Some of these anomalies solve themselves. These old pensioners die.

#### *Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

They cannot wait, and this is why the problem needs urgent consideration. The 2 per cent maximum cost of living adjustment on the pension during a period of inflation is a crime. These people are getting behind about 2 per cent per year. They are losing in terms of real income. The situation in which a pensioner's income ceases part way through the year is another anomaly. There is no adjustment possible unless he remarries, which is unlikely, or perhaps retires during that period.

There are a number of things that need to be corrected and I am certain the minister is working on them. I am sure that all members of the house are aware of many anomalies that require urgent attention. The members of this party, and I am sure the members of other parties, are looking forward with great hope to some words from the minister that indicate the government is really serious about solving this completely unnecessary but tragic problem.

#### *[Translation]*

**Mr. Rosaire Gendron (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose) says, the minister is fully aware of the problems he raises, and he has already stated that there are certain anomalies which have become apparent in the guaranteed income supplement legislation.

One of the areas which the government has under consideration is the situation where the spouse of a recipient receives the old age security pension for only part of a particular year, perhaps for only one month.

A further word of explanation might be in order. If a recipient or his spouse, maybe both of them, has income from other sources, it is correct that he would receive a different rate of supplement in a year in which his spouse was a pensioner from that he received in the previous year when his spouse was not a pensioner at any time.

However, if neither has any income, the rate would not change, since the maximum supplement would be payable in both years. Even where there is outside income, in which case the supplement of a recipient might be lower than in the earlier year, the receipt by the spouse of pension and supplement might mean that their overall income for the year is greater than in the year before. This is not always the case, however, depending on individual circumstances, and it is here that