

Old Age and Veterans' Pensions

else. Oh, one can have \$1.95 of income and still draw the full guaranteed income supplement. If one receives \$2 he starts to lose. As I say, it is therefore clear that over 30 per cent of the people of Canada who are 65 years of age or over literally are below the poverty line; literally, they have nothing else. This is demonstrated because they draw the full \$111.41 a month which is available to them under the old age security pension and guaranteed income supplement.

Now, let me demonstrate with another set of figures the position of these people. The present arrangement in the Old Age Security Act of a basic pension of \$75 plus \$30 guaranteed income supplement, subject to increases year by year as the cost of living goes up, was enacted in 1966. May I emphasize the fact that in 1966 the consumer price index—popularly known as the cost of living index—stood at 111.4. Today, in this part of 1970, the consumer price index stands at 128.9, and it is still rising. Thus, since the present basic pension figures were established there has been an increase in the cost of living of 17.5 percentage points or 15.7 per cent.

Let me repeat that from 1966, the year in which the guaranteed income supplement was brought in, to the present time there has been an increase in the cost of living of 15.7 per cent. During that period of time, however, the increase that old age pensioners have had on the basis of the supplement of up to 2 per cent per year on account of the cost of living increase has been only 6.1 per cent. That is, the \$79.58 per month they received instead of \$75 or the \$111.41 they received if on the guaranteed income supplement instead of \$105, is an increase of only 6.1 per cent. Therefore, that is a clear indication of the position of these people. Their cost of living has gone up in the period from 1966 to 1970 by 15.7 per cent and their pension has gone up by 6.1 per cent. That is the situation in respect of 30 per cent of the people of Canada who are 65 years of age or over. We are literally taking money out of the pockets of those people who make up that 30 per cent or more. Their costs have gone up by 15.7 per cent, their pensions have gone up by 6.1 per cent and they are 9.6 per cent behind. That is the same as taking \$9 out of every \$100 they get. Therefore, I say that the situation is an emergency one and that the time to act on it is now.

Having given these figures, may I add a few more and then I think I will be through with figures. My motion refers to two main

groups, the recipients of old age security pensions on the one hand and war veterans on the other. According to the latest figures I have been able to obtain, there are 136,800 veterans drawing pensions under the Pension Act. About 29,800 survivors also draw pensions under the Pension Act and there are 83,400 who draw allowances under the War Veterans Allowance Act. It would not be correct to add those figures for a grand total of 250,000 because there is a fair amount of overlapping between the War Veterans Allowance Act and the Pension Act. I suspect, however, there are close to 200,000 individuals, either veterans or survivors—their widows and their children—who are drawing pensions under these two pieces of legislation. There have been some increases in these pensions but it is a long time since those increases were granted. There have been no cost of living adjustments in the pensions paid under the Pension Act nor in the allowances paid under the War Veterans Allowance Act.

It is true that if a veteran or his widow is on the guaranteed income supplement and the war veterans allowance, that person receives the increase in the guaranteed income supplement and the war veterans allowance people graciously allow such a person to keep it without taking it away. But that is an increase only in the guaranteed income supplement and old age pension and not in the war veterans allowance portion of his income. Therefore, we have moved this motion not only on behalf of the 1.5 million Canadians who draw the pension or supplement under the Old Age Security Act but also on behalf of these 200,000 people who draw pensions or allowances under the Pension Act or the War Veterans Allowance Act.

Now, I know that during the course of this debate we will be told these matters are under consideration. We all know this. If I may deal with the veteran side of the problem, this is in the hands of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and I must not take advantage of the fact that the committee has not yet reported. But I believe it is proper for me to point out that, although that committee is dealing with the Woods report and with the government's white paper on the Woods report, we have been told categorically by the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé) that matters having to do with the amount of the pensions paid under the Pension Act and the amount of the allowances paid under the War Veterans Allowance Act must wait until after we have had the gov-