

Motion for Adjournment

Canada has a cost of living index attached to their pension plans.

When we reach a decision on this matter, if it is to be a permanent solution as hon. members opposite have suggested, then perhaps there must be some sort of cost of living index attached to it. This is not a simple matter. The worst cases of retired civil servants, indeed the worst cases of all pensioners throughout this country, have been taken care of through the supplementary old age pension plan which guarantees every older Canadian, whether or not he be a civil servant, a minimum income of \$105 per month when he becomes pensionable. This pension has the cost of living index attached to it.

Very careful consideration has been given the report of the committee. I have assured hon. members in answering their questions that the whole matter is being given careful consideration. We intend to continue this consideration. Our course of action will be announced in the fall. I have said publicly and privately what my own hopes are in connection with this matter, but it is up to the government to make a decision on the specific plan that will be brought forward. We should not make a decision that will give somebody \$25 and somebody else \$5. This is not the way to solve this problem. It has to be solved in a way that will prevent its recurrence every few years, as happened under the Leader of the Opposition when action was taken and then nothing happened for the next four years. I believe the retired civil servants got behind relative to the cost of living at that time as well.

Mr. Douglas: May I ask the minister if the government had not given any consideration to a formula prior to receiving the report on this matter from the joint committee of the house and the Senate?

• (12:30 p.m.)

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, the government has given consideration to many formulas, including the formula used in 1958 which we deemed not to be appropriate as a method to solve this problem finally. We are continuing our consideration of this matter but it is not quite as simple as my hon. friend tries to point out. People are receiving pensions from the civil service having worked for varying periods of time. One could argue that if one made a flat rate adjustment of some sort and somebody receiving \$110 a month received \$125 or \$135 a month, that person may have worked for the civil service for only a very

short period but would be treated in the same way as long-term employees, which would be unfair. It is a complicated matter—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not want to interrupt the minister but I think I should take the liberty of reminding all hon. members who are taking part in this discussion that contributions to the debate must be, to some extent at least, relevant to the motion before the house. I assume it is in order to refer to the pensions of retired civil servants, but remarks should be related to the question as to whether or not we adjourn. That is the question which is before the house.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I feel it is very important that a number of us say something on this matter. There is no monopoly in this house, certainly none on the other side, when it comes to diverting attention away from the real issue that is under discussion this morning. That issue, as Your Honour has just pointed out, is whether or not we adjourn or take time off—I do not call it a holiday because most of us know better than that, though it will provide a change of scene and some respite for us—before we deal with the pensions of retired civil servants.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) has had so many years of practice at covering up that he has tried to cover up this matter with a very entertaining diversion about the recent convention held by our party. Other diversionary tactics have been tried. But the fact remains that this matter must be discussed now and we must decide whether or not this government is falling down on its duty by not dealing with the pensions issue before we adjourn.

The Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Benson) indicated that the government could not in the last five minutes bring in a pension plan, or he indicated that the government should not be expected to do that. I suggest there is no validity to that argument. This matter has been under discussion for a long time indeed.

All I want to do at this stage is to adduce the evidence of a witness, one not from our group but one that speaks for a great many people across this country. There are many other witnesses of this type. I want to quote an editorial which appeared in the *Vancouver Province* on June 24, 1967. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the *Vancouver Province* does not belong to our party. It is not influenced by our party; neither does it give credit to our party unless that credit is very dearly earned