

*Pensions Act*

the bill introduced by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss LaMarsh).

Of course, we are all in favour of these increases, but nevertheless I would like to make a few brief comments on the present situation in that regard.

The bill provides for a \$10 increase per month. As we said so many times, under this administration as well as under the previous one which had not considered advisable to give retroactivity to the measure, this increase of \$10 has been set by rule of thumb because it certainly is not based on any special study of the cost of living at this time. This increase is a good thing, but, once again, we would like that all those increases pertaining to social security, provided at any time and by whatever government, be based on the cost of living.

If we look at the increases which are being granted at this time, particularly in connection with the maximum income permitted the recipients of those social security allowances, we see that a disabled person cannot earn more than \$360 a year under the terms of subparagraph (i), subsection 2 of section 1, while a married person living with his spouse cannot earn more than \$1,320, for if we add the \$900, it amounts to the total of \$2,220.

Under subparagraph (iii), subsection 2 of section 2, the permissible income is \$2,580. That means that a couple cannot earn more than \$1,680. If we consider the cost of living today, we realize that such amounts are clearly inadequate. However, we are pleased that the pensions have at least reached the level provided for in this legislation.

In the case of the Blind Persons Act, the situation is the same except that the amounts are higher.

I should like to bring up here the fact that the Canadian National Institute for the Blind has requested that there be no restriction set concerning the blind's income because their incapacity has physical, psychological and mental effects. The institute rightly feels that there should be no maximum limit on the income of those who are entitled to benefits under the Blind Persons Act.

Referring once again to the subparagraphs, it will be noted that the permissible incomes are \$600, \$1,080, \$1,680 and \$1,800 in the case of the blind. I respectfully submit, Mr. Speaker, that those increases are very little and that they will not do much for the recipients but, in spite of the restrictions contained in the bill, we are glad that the government has decided to boost those pensions.

It is better than nothing. And I would suggest that the hon. lady might consider, perhaps at the very next session, a substantial increase in those pensions, based on the actual

cost of living and not on political expediency as it has been done in the past by most political parties.

When we consider the Disabled Persons Act, I am always reminded of the time when I used to examine people who applied for such benefits. I was made aware then that the act is indeed restrictive and many people cannot take advantage of it. I am thinking of epileptics, for instance. Those people, afflicted with a recurring disease, might go through long periods of regression, but they can also have attacks at very short intervals. In spite of this, those persons are not yet covered by the act.

I submit that they should be, along with some people who were unfortunate enough to lose both hands in an accident. They are not eligible under the pretext that with the limbs they have left or with the help of artificial limbs, they can still earn a decent living.

I suggest that this is impossible when such a person is a skilled worker. I feel that those people should be eligible under the present act.

I should like to make a few brief remarks about increased family allowances.

As you know, when family allowances were established, the basic rate was \$5 per child and the number of children entitled to those allowances was limited to seven. Now, several years after the establishment of these allowances, the basic rate is \$6 instead of \$5 and the maximum amount is \$8 instead of \$7, that is only a one dollar increase in both cases. However, there is no limit as to the number of children entitled to these allowances.

Once again, I ask the minister to consider the possibility of increasing family allowances and of extending them to children over 16 years of age, especially to students.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to delay the passage of this legislation and once again, I am pleased to say that our group is in favour of the proposed increase. We are glad about it, especially for those who will benefit from it. But we submit that this increase is not at all in keeping with the increase of expenses for the recipients. Therefore, I hope that in the very near future, the minister will see fit to work out those increases more in terms of the cost of living.

As far as retroactivity is concerned, I do not think political capital should be made out of it. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) indicated that he had been advocating that for a long time. We have also discussed that matter for a long time, but I think it is much more difficult to carry out such projects than to discuss them. We also would like to have a retroactive legislation, but we are not going to delay the passing of the bill because there is no such indication.