

Motion for Adjournment

recess. Editorial writers in some of our newspapers notwithstanding, I think parliament should take a recess, that we should have the benefit of being back among our constituents and other benefits which flow from a few weeks away from Ottawa. But I object as strongly as I can to the idea of our breaking for a summer recess without dealing with the question of the pensions of retired civil servants. The motion now before us has been worded in such a way as to make it impossible for this question to be dealt with before we recess.

● (11:40 a.m.)

I wish to point out that this motion is somewhat different from the usual motion which is made to provide for a break in a session of parliament. On occasion such a motion has been made without notice, requiring unanimous consent. The government was quite right in anticipating that such consent might not be forthcoming today, for I would not have agreed. On other occasions when a motion has been put on the order paper to provide for a recess there have been consultations among the house leaders. Let me make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that there were consultations with regard to the date that we are to come back, namely, September 25. I for one agreed to that date, so I am not now objecting to it. But unlike other occasions I was not shown the form of this motion until I saw it on the notice paper attached to yesterday's *Votes and Proceedings*.

When I look at the motion I note it is drafted in such a way that once the government has arranged for the Deputy to His Excellency the Governor General to come and give royal assent to the supply bills we passed last night, nothing further can be done in this House of Commons. I object to this way of doing it. I object to our not being consulted as to the form of this motion, and I object very strongly to the government's performance with respect to the question of increasing the pensions of retired civil servants.

As I indicated a moment ago, I intend to move an amendment to this motion which would accept the fact of adjourning, which would accept the fact of a recess until September 25, but which would require that before adjourning we deal with the question of the pensions of retired civil servants.

An hon. Member: Blackmail.

Mr. Knowles: There is an interjection from over there, but I am not sure that I understood it.

A lot has been said today about the workings of parliament. One of the ways in which parliament works best is when there is the keeping of promises, when there is a carrying out of things that have been understood. This question that I am talking about is not only one that has been before us in parliament in a general way for more than two decades but it has been before us in a specific way for more than a year.

I do not intend to go into all the details because I am citing this only in support of my opposition to the motion, but the fact is that after a committee study a unanimous recommendation was made on May 8 this year that the pensions of retired civil servants be increased. We have been assured a dozen times since then, on the floor of this house, that the matter was under active consideration. One cannot talk about the things one is told outside the House of Commons, but one knows what one reads in the press and the indications were clear a few weeks ago that something was going to be done before this session broke. This commitment was very definite, but now we come to the time of recess and nothing is being done.

The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Benson) is trying to tell us it is a complicated issue. I cannot accept that as an excuse for not acting on this matter. The President of the Treasury Board has as his deputy minister one of the most accomplished individuals in the public service of Canada, a man who overnight could draft a proposition to deal with this matter. As a matter of fact it was dealt with several years ago during the régime of the previous government, and I suggest there has been plenty of time to bring before parliament a measure dealing with the pensions of retired civil servants.

To argue, as the President of the Treasury Board does, that the government across the way has done more for civil servants than anybody else, is nonsense. It is arguing by assertion, and it does not meet the point that nothing is being done in this part of the session about the pensions of retired civil servants.

The plea that is made to me, both on the floor of the house and by Liberals out in the hall, is that I should wait until fall. It is going to be done, they will get the pension increases and they will be retroactive, so what am I complaining about. Mr. Speaker, when people have waited for years, when they have waited for months, when for weeks they have had reason to believe something would be done,