

*Interim Supply*

side, to press the government to act on this issue.

I said last July, when we were speaking on this matter, that to delay it till the fall was unfair; that many people would not live to receive any benefit that might come later. Many hundreds have died in the meantime, as you will see if you check the figures from one year to the next. These people have not enjoyed the benefit of the proposed increases. This will continue to be the situation unless action is taken.

There is no excuse whatsoever for this delay. I say again that if ever there was an opinion expressed that ought to be recognized, it is the opinion of the special joint committee on the public service of Canada, which represented both houses of parliament and all parties. This committee met for many months—I think it was about a year—dealing with four or five different pieces of legislation. It was thoroughly seized of the problems of the federal public service, and I think the recommendation it made was a well thought out and responsible one.

As I say, I want to leave for others the opportunity to comment on this question if they wish to do so. I hope the Minister of Industry has been taking this in, as the acting President of the Treasury Board today. I am glad to see that the Solicitor General is also present, and the Minister of Labour. We are favoured at this particular time by having in the chamber ministers who are not involved in the leadership race that is taking place. They can attend to good, solid business. I see that the parliamentary secretary to the President of the Treasury Board is here as well. I call on all of them to face up to the seriousness of this issue. Let us not disappoint these people any longer. The government should not any longer have the reputation of being the kind of employer that does not come through with what is deserved, and what these people have a right to expect.

As I have already pointed out, the Prime Minister said to me in reply to one of my questions: The hon. member must never give up hope. Well, Mr. Chairman, I am not giving up hope. I trust that action will be taken before the present Prime Minister leaves office in April. I urge that this be done without fail.

**Mr. Richard:** Mr. Chairman, it is perhaps a little late in the day, but I should say a few words on the subject raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. As hon. members know, for the past 20 years I have been

[Mr. Knowles.]

one of those pleading the cause of the retired civil servants. So this problem is not new, and it should have been settled a long time ago.

About two years ago I accepted the chairmanship of the joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons which inquired into the public service situation, and more particularly dealt with legislation which was presented to this house. We had a very good and very able committee. There was agreement on all sides. When those bills had been disposed of we were requested to deal with the question of retired civil servants. I agreed to continue as chairman of the committee, not with the hope but with conviction that I was doing a job. I was fully convinced we would prepare a plan that would be accepted in due time by the house.

Hon. members will recall that we made haste in the committee and on the last day, just before the closing of the session, on May 8, 1967, I presented a unanimous report of the committee. I agree that something has to be done in this regard. I hope it can be done before this session is ended. There is absolutely no financial reason why this matter should not be dealt with. It is a small matter in the budget of this country. Figures were presented to our committee which have not been challenged or denied, because they were presented by officials of Treasury Board. The people affected by this delay have been suffering because of the inequitable treatment being afforded them. I am sure I speak for many members of the house when I say that I cannot see how we can delay action any longer.

More and more representations from organizations are being made to me. But what can an ordinary member do at this time, except tell these people that consideration is still being given to the report, which is clear and is not out of line with regard to the possible cost? The implementation of the report would be doing only what this committee decided should be done, at the request of the government.

I am sure there are many cabinet members in agreement with the findings of our committee. The dissidents, or those who have been in the way of progress in regard to this legislation, should rise in their places and tell us all why the legislation should not be put through.

**Mr. McCleave:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to make one point and draw to the attention