

*Old Age and Veterans' Pensions*

rules to the six opposition days for such motions, but in the years when we had non-confidence motions attached to motions of supply—where a so-called non-confidence motion lost that character because the government accepted what was proposed therein. Therefore, I hope that the government spokesman today, when he speaks to the motion, instead of raising a point of order will welcome the fact that I did not use the word “condemn”, and will welcome the fact that this motion, filed though it is under Standing Order 58(9), calls on the government to take a certain course of action.

I filed it under Standing Order 58(9) for this reason only, that if the government is unwilling to agree with the simple, clearly stated, straightforward proposition in the motion then, of course, we shall have to express by our vote non-confidence in the government, a non-confidence being felt by an increasing number of Canadians. Therefore, I hope that during the course of the day we will not have the sort of speeches we sometimes hear from members on the government side who stand up and say they agree with what is in the motion—sometimes they say that they are more in agreement with the motion than we are—but, of course, they will have to vote against the motion because it is one of non-confidence. This so-called non-confidence motion can fast become a confidence motion if the government will just agree that what is being asked for in this motion is something that the government ought to do right away.

I said in my opening sentence or two that this motion asked the House to consider the plight of our old age pensioners and war veterans, not just in academic terms, not just as though once again, as we do so often, we were having an intellectual discussion about pensions, but rather in terms of the emergency situation that has developed.

I want to give the House a few figures, but only a few, to support my contention that we are in an emergency as far as these people are concerned. However, before I do so may I point out that we have taken care of the pensions of certain other groups. For example, we have improved the pensions of retired public servants, retired personnel of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, retired personnel of the permanent armed forces and others in similar categories. We have taken care of our own pensions, and we have done that rather nicely. We have had referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Communications the question of the pensions of retired Canadian National Railway employees, and I hope we will get at that matter soon. If we get action in this area, I hope it will carry over to the retired employees of the Canadian Pacific Railway and others.

There are groups in our society, therefore, who have had their pension position protected or improved, and rightly so. This action has been taken in the midst of this inflationary period, this period of austerity. This is because all members of the House contend that if there is any case to be made for a measure of austerity, the last people who should suffer from it are our pensioners, whether they be retired civil servants, retired permanent armed forces people, retired Members of Parliament, those retired some years ago, or what have you.

Having done all this for all these other groups of people, I say we are being most unfair if we call upon our old age pensioners and war veterans who are recipients of pensions under the Pension Act or of allowances under the War Veterans Allowance Act to wait while we go on and on in our study of the Woods report and the white paper on that report, and in the hope that some day we will see the government's white paper on social security based on the Willard report.

I think a few figures will demonstrate that the situation is one of emergency. According to the latest figures I have at hand, which are to be found in *Hansard* for November 17, 1969, there were at that date 1,529,768 recipients of the old age security pension. At that time 785,873 of those people were also in receipt of the guaranteed income supplement; and 473,358 of those were drawing the full amount of the guaranteed income supplement.

Let me put these figures in terms of percentages. This means that 51 per cent of all our old age security pensioners, those people in Canada who are 65 years of age and over, are drawing the guaranteed income supplement, having submitted themselves to the income test that is involved. This means that those people are close to the poverty line. Of that 51 per cent of pensioners drawing the guaranteed income supplement, 60 per cent, or nearly 31 per cent of the grand total, are drawing the full amount of the guaranteed income supplement.

• (3:30 p.m.)

In order to draw the guaranteed income supplement one literally must have nothing