

Statute Law Amendment Act, 1970

receive their pensions is examined at the earliest possible date. I said I would propose a four point program, Mr. Speaker. This is the first point, that we ought to review the Public Service Superannuation Act and related pension acts, and in my book this is a must.

Point No. 2 is this. I think we simply must review the War Veterans Allowance Act and particularly its means test provisions. The most difficult letters I receive and have to answer every week relate to this. I do not get such letters as the one on my desk only once in a while; I get them all the time. We simply must review that piece of legislation, particularly in view of what we have done for ourselves.

My third point is that we ought to give more consideration to other pensions. The question of CNR pensions has been referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, and the committee should get cracking on that matter. There is also the question of those people who are covered by the Intercolonial and Prince Edward Island Railways Employees' Provident Fund. Some of these people thought they were covered by Bill C-194, but I find they are not. I find also that retired employees of the Bank of Canada are not covered. I do not mean the big people at the top; they fix their pensions very nicely. I am speaking of the ordinary Joes who are not covered so far as the increases in this bill are concerned. If we are to do a good job, let us consider all these people.

We must also take another look at the Pension Benefits Standards Act, that federal legislation governing the standards the pension plans of private companies must meet. The day must come when, through legislation, we shall require all pension plans to contain a pension escalation clause. The Standing Committee on Transport and Communications can tell the CNR to treat its retired employees the same way the federal government treats its retired federal servants, but it cannot say that to the CPR. But we can write that sort of provision into the Pension Benefits Standards Act. So, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of those who think our job with respect to pensions is over, I can say it is not over and probably never will be. But there are specific improvements that we can make.

My fourth point in my four point program relates to the Old Age Security Act. The government is saying to the people who come under that legislation that they must wait for the white paper on social security. We did not have to wait. We have gone ahead with ours.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

This fact puts added pressure on us to do something about old age pensions at this session. We have been told since last October we were going to get the government's white paper. We will not get it in March, Mr. Speaker. We might get it in April, but more likely in May or June. Then, of course, it will have to be digested, sent to committee and all the rest. The way the present timetable is set up there is just no room for an old age pension increase at this session.

• (4:00 p.m.)

I come back ad nauseam to what we have done for ourselves. I say we have not made just a change of degree, we have made a change of kind. We brought in for ourselves the guaranteed annual income. It is a new concept. If you can win two elections, you will receive the guaranteed income. We have done it generously and handsomely. Having done that, we cannot go on leaving our old age people at \$75 a month with a 2 per cent increase per year, \$30 extra if you pass a means test. I think the time has come for a new guaranteed income concept that involves pensions of a level at which people can live. By all the gods of war, we in this House who are doing for ourselves what this bill provides, although it is over the protest of some of us, have an obligation not to rest and let this issue wait until the next session or the session before the next election.

As members of the House of Commons have made pensions a major issue, we have made pensions something worth getting, something which will add dignity and decency to life, at least that is so for ourselves. It is time we did this for all. The obligation to do this is made even greater because of what we have done for ourselves. Am I hopeful it will be done? I am afraid I am not. I have sat opposite this government long enough to realize it does not have any heart. It is not concerned about old age pensioners or war veterans allowance recipients. My prediction is that nothing will be done, not by this government.

Not only do I know this government, but I know the processes of Parliament. The only way you can get something is when you have a bargaining position. You do not get it afterwards. Members will say, having done this for ourselves, we will now do something for others. We do for others only as long as there is any point of pressure left. Once this bill is through, the Public Service Superannuation Act, the War Veterans Allowance Act, the Pension Benefits Standard Act and the Old