

them a happy life particularly when they contributed to a pension plan as public servants do.

I think the light increases proposed in this bill should be accepted and I am convinced that my colleagues of the Social Credit will join me in voting for this bill on second reading.

When listening to the first round of speeches, it seemed to me that all parties agreed on what was proposed; of course, we always hope to get more, but at least we can be sure that retired civil servants will get a little more than they had before.

This example should be followed at all government levels: I am thinking, for instance, of the workmen's compensation legislation. In some provinces, compensation payments are still not geared to the cost of living. There are people who have been getting full compensation for many years and who are still receiving the same amounts they got when the accident happened. Those amounts are no longer sufficient today and I think that the example given in this bill should encourage governments at all levels to follow suit.

● (1420)

[English]

**Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) for the very short and succinct speech he made introducing what I think is an extremely important piece of legislation for all those who, in some way or another, have served their country in the public service. I am glad that he did not embark on an immodest extolling of the virtues of his predecessor or his own virtues, as did the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) recently. Perhaps his conduct in this regard is due to the fact that, so far as the public service is concerned, there are few virtues the President of the Treasury Board can extoll. This may have had something to do with the length of his speech and with the lack of self-congratulation.

The government does not want to take upon itself sole credit for the fact that we are dealing with this legislation. Members of the government certainly are draftsmen of the bill, but if you examine the history of public service legislation you find that this government and its predecessors were really dragged, kicking and screaming, to the point where they finally gave in to what, over the years, were the reasonable demands of public service staff associations, the officers of public service associations, retired public servants and others who have written to people like myself and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). As I say, the government has finally given in and seen the reason for positions that have been taken by my party and, for that matter, the NDP with respect to this matter.

The shame with respect to this legislation is that the motive behind it is not primarily to protect the public servant. It is far from that. The government has not acted to save the retired public servant from hardship. The government acted as it has in the past few days just to save itself. That is the prime motivation. For a long time this move toward increased pension benefits for a great number of people who served their country well has been

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urged on the government by members of this party, the staff associations and other interested people, but the government waited to act until there was a crisis upon the country. From the point of view of motivation the government cannot clothe itself in a cloak of compassion and humanity. That has not been a hallmark of the government with respect to action on public service matters.

This morning during the question period I asked the President of the Treasury Board why amendments to the Public Service Employment Act, forecast in the Speech from the Throne on January 4, 1973, had not yet been introduced, despite urgings from me and from my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre. Why has there been this delay? Why did we debate capital punishment for so many days when there were so many things that had to be done, particularly with respect to public servants? I cannot recall his exact words, but the usual answer has been, "In due course these things will come forward."

**Mr. Reilly:** In the fullness of time.

**Mr. Baker:** Or in the fullness of time, as the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Reilly) says. Moreover, I read in the *Ottawa Journal* last evening that the Public Service Alliance of Canada, representing 40,000 of its members, has had to break off negotiations with the Treasury Board on various matters, one of the most important of which is compensation to the public servant. According to press reports the latest Treasury Board offer is a 3 per cent increase in pay for this year and, I think, 2 per cent for the next year. That is unreasonable, Mr. Speaker, and that attitude is breaking the back of free collective bargaining in this country. The offer does not even keep up with the increase in the cost of living which stands at an annual rate of 8 per cent. The government should realize that it must deal properly with its public servants and that is why I say it ought not to clothe itself in a mantle of glory with regard to this legislation. It has been dragged kicking and screaming to this point in an atmosphere of crisis which was, to a large extent, of its own making.

● (1430)

I want to say to the President of the Treasury Board that my party approves of the proposals he has brought forward in the legislation. I think he realizes that, and I think he realizes that the legislation is long overdue. In the time it has taken the government to bring it forward retired government employees have seen the buying power of their pensions shrink, and for many of them their circumstances have gone from bad to worse; they have become discouraged. I have had many letters from retired public servants who had been looking forward to a future of reasonable security but the view has become more bleak by the month.

I hope this legislation is not coming as too little and too late to rectify the situation, particularly for the older ones. I hope that what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said with laudable vision with respect to retroactivity, will make the difference so that they may live out their years in reasonable peace and security.

**Mr. Speaker,** I have to commend the minister for at long last going on his own and not waiting for some change in the Canada Pension Plan. I join with the hon. member for