

Old Age and Veterans' Pensions

that it is taking a hard line if it wants to do so. In fact, this government is being revealed to the nation as cold-blooded.

Mr. Woolliams: It is against the poor.

Mr. Stanfield: They will certainly hold the line. Yet I suggest that we owe the elderly people of this country not only gratitude but justice. They have a special claim to the attention of the government, because it is difficult to be old in a country that is so consciously young. Already, and often with adequate reasons, governments have changed traditions that were part of life to many older Canadians. Urbanization has changed their landscape and broadcasting and other influences have changed their sense of standards. A good many of the events of the last few decades in Canada have militated, in effect, against the elderly. This country which they built is less easy for them to live in than it was for their parents or grandparents. These are the people who built Canada when they were young and who are eligible for pensions today.

• (4:10 p.m.)

These people are the psychological victims of change. Instead of adding to their discomfort by making them the economic victims of deliberate government policy, this government should go out of its way to show its older citizens that this is their country too, that we are grateful for their service and determined to ensure that they live their last years in as much decency and comfort as is possible. Therefore, I sincerely press the government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. I regret I have to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Does the House give unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Stanfield: I was just finishing my last sentence, Mr. Speaker. I urge the government to seriously consider the contents of this resolution and the recommendation contained in the resolution, that financial relief be granted to our older people and veterans so that we can feel we are doing something like justice for these people.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the motion now before us deals with a most urgent matter since, as far back as 1962 at least, hon. members were recommending the adoption of measures similar to those suggested in this motion which reads as follows:

That this House calls upon the government to give consideration to an immediate and substantial increase in the basic amount of the old age security pension and in veterans' pensions and allowances, and this House also urges that still further steps be taken to improve the quality of life of all our older and retired people.

Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, I met retired CNR employees, one of whom receives a monthly pension of \$28.

It is so ridiculous that I even advised him to return his cheque, because it was not worth it cashing a \$27, \$28 pension cheque after having worked 30 or 35 years for the Canadian National.

As social security, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) mentioned that the white paper was about to be brought out, as announced at the opening of the session. This was referred to several times last year and two years ago, and in the meanwhile, our pensioners are still barely able to keep body and soul together, living in need.

As the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) said of the veterans, they are the very ones who from 1939 to 1945 were on the other side of the Atlantic, ready to shed their blood for country, civilization and Christendom.

Mr. Ralston, then Minister of National Defence, visited them in Europe. The Right Hon. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister, and the Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe, Deputy Prime Minister, enjoined our soliders to fight gallantly. When you return to Canada, they said, you will never know want, recession or insecurity.

During the four or five years that the war lasted, young people were encouraged with brazen lies since today, married veterans get \$245 a month and unmarried ones, \$145. I think these allowances are not enough, and it is a shame to treat these veterans this way.

If war were declared tomorrow, the same promises would be made to the new generation of soldiers. They would be told: When the war is over, you will never have insecurity again.

Right now, in Canada, veterans have no security at all and they are worried.