

*Interim Supply*

Likewise on January 31, 1968, as recorded at page 6207, the Prime Minister assured me that the matter was one of great importance and was continuing to receive consideration. On Friday, February 9, 1968, I again asked the Prime Minister whether there was hope that this matter would be dealt with before he relinquished his office as Prime Minister. His reply to me was, as recorded at page 6558 of *Hansard* on that day, was "I certainly hope that the situation will improve." Again on Wednesday, March 13, 1968, I asked a similar question, and on page 7586 of *Hansard* the Prime Minister replied as follows: "Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must never give up hope."

That is a pretty hard admonition to follow in this case, because here we are very close to the end of this session and very close to the end of the present Prime Minister's régime, and nothing has yet been done. Maybe I should accept the fact that there is no hope that anything will be done while the present Prime Minister still occupies that office, but I refuse to do so. I refuse to give up hope.

On Wednesday, March 20, 1968, I asked a similar question. This is the last sentence of the Prime Minister's reply to my question as to whether something would be done before we resume in April, as recorded at page 7863 of *Hansard*:

We will certainly give the matter consideration and do what we think is right in the circumstances.

That is a pretty ambiguous reply. Doing what is right in the view of the Prime Minister might be doing nothing, but I cannot imagine that the Prime Minister would play with words in that way. Surely when he said "we will" do something he meant something, rather than nothing. I call upon the Prime Minister, as did the hon. member for Carleton today, and as several of us have done during the past few weeks, to crown his career as Prime Minister of this country by dealing with this very important matter.

I recognize that it was not possible for the Prime Minister to remain in the house this afternoon, but I am told that the Minister of Industry is here representing the President of the Treasury Board on this matter. I notice other members of the cabinet in attendance as well, and I hope that in spite of their preoccupation during the next couple of weeks with other matters they will in their cabinet discussions face the fact that in all honesty, decency and fairness they must deal with this issue.

It is not my intention to take the time to go over all the arguments which have been placed on the record time and time again in favour of increasing the pensions of retired civil servants. The figures have been placed in *Hansard* repeatedly regarding the number of people involved: 30,000 retired civil servants, 15,000 widows of retired civil servants and several thousand in the other two categories. There are also figures on the record showing the huge amounts of money credited to the public service superannuation fund, as well as to the other two funds.

In the case of all three funds, for retired civil servants, for retired R.C.M.P. personnel and for retired armed forces personnel, the interest that is being paid each year on the amount in the funds is by itself greater than the amount that is being paid out in pensions to retired people. It seems to me that there is no argument against the capacity of the government to pay these increased pensions, and I insist that action should be taken now. There are those who resist doing something for these people on the ground that we should not do something for one group of people that we do not do for all. In reply to that I say again that the government has a special responsibility to its own employees, the responsibility of being a good employer. I also say that this business of escalating pensions is an issue facing us in the pension field in respect of which we will have to do something substantial in the next few years, or our whole pension structure will collapse.

I suggest there is no better place for the government to begin the escalation of pensions that have been put in pay than in respect of its own employees. The government has already accepted the principle in part by putting an escalation clause in the Old Age Security Act and in the Canada Pension Plan. I suggest this ought to be done here as well.

● (4:20 p.m.)

The time is limited and I see two or three others who may wish to get to their feet and support this plea. I hope they will. I hope the hon. member for Carleton will have a few appropriate words to say. I hope the hon. member for Ottawa East will also rise and say something about this matter, because I know how strongly he feels about it. I know he feels as disappointed as I do that the report which we tabled on May 8, 1967, was put on the shelf, only to be covered with dust. I hope that hon. member will use his influence, as a member on the government