

*Railways*

I not do see why these pensioners should be at the mercy of that kind of capricious judgment, however generous that judgment might have been from time to time. But it has not been all that generous, I can tell you, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Member said that it was a plan that was above average, or better than most. The fact is that that is a statement about all the other pension plans in the country. It is not a statement about how good the CN pension plan is. It is a statement about how inadequate private pensions are in this country. The time for pension reform is long overdue, and the time for reform of the CN pension plan is even more overdue.

● (2140)

**Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton—Strathcona):** Madam Speaker, I would like to say a few words about this motion. Your Honour will perhaps know that Edmonton is a CN town and many of my constituents are CN pensioners, including a neighbour. I do not believe I am overstating the facts to say that thousands and thousands of people in southeast Edmonton have worked for CN in the past, or are working for it now. I believe that they would want me to support strongly the motion of the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson). I know of Mr. White from past interventions he has made on this issue. I hope that all Members of the House will vote in favour of this motion.

Unfortunately, I do not have Mr. White's representations with me. However, I know, as I am sure you do, Madam Speaker, from your constituents, that there is a concern that the pension situation for CN pensioners is not as good as it should be. I certainly agree with the Hon. Member who just spoke that other pension plans are even more inadequate. There is a concern that indexation is not there. If CN management feels like it, they will give it; if, for one reason or another, the CN management does not feel like it, then it will not be there.

Actuarial studies have shown repeatedly that men and women who have adequate pensions live longer than those who do not. That is an accepted fact throughout the life insurance industry, and it is one that none of us in the House should ever forget.

For a few summers many years ago I worked swinging a pick on a steel gang, as did the Hon. Member for Burnaby, and we both know a little about what it is like to work on a CN or CP section gang or steel gang. It is very hard work. If a person does that work for 30, 40, or 50 years, that person deserves to have indexation. CN pensioners deserve it, and I hope that it will come quickly. In my view the Government should have done it before. Indexation should be made a matter of law or a matter of legal obligation for both railway pension plans.

If CN is taking moneys or profits out of the pension plan that should go to the pensioners and not to CN's capital expansion or higher salaries to executives, that is something

which I believe is unacceptable to a vast majority of Canadians.

There is a strong feeling across Canada, as Mr. White has shown to all of us, that the CN pension plan is not being managed adequately. Something has to be done about the CN pension plan.

I commend the Member for bringing this motion to the House tonight. I hope that all Members will vote for the motion and for what is behind it. The Hon. Member is attempting to help Mr. White, who I understand is now 79, to see something concrete, and a general and specific improvement of the CN pension plan for all former CN employees.

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Madam Speaker, I only wish to take a few moments this evening because I know there is all-Party agreement and support for the motion to recognize J. E. White and the Canadian Railway Employees' Pension Association.

When I came to this place in October, 1968, one of the first things I started trying to do was something about railway pensions. Like others who have spoken, I had a personal interest in the matter. I had been a railroader, and I was the third generation in our family. My grandfather worked for the CPR in Revelstoke in the early 1900s, my father from 1919 to 1950, and I went to work for the CPR in 1947 after I got out of the Army.

I remember when I started my fellow employees, particularly the older ones, my local union officers, and even the local officials of the CPR. Whenever I asked about it or whenever I was at a union meeting, I was always given to understand that every month I put so much into the pension plan, the company put an equal amount into the pension plan, and upon retirement that was my pension.

When I came to Parliament and started looking at the annual reports of Canadian National and Canadian Pacific, each year there was always something called an "unfunded liability". It was in excess of \$1 billion for the CPR and almost \$2 billion for the CNR. I thought, holy mackerel, that is a lot of money. There is no reason that those companies cannot pay indexed pensions or cannot raise the basic pension. However, I was just an innocent stubble jumping prairie boy. I kept going after the railroads in committee, and I think I have been through seven or eight different Ministers of Transport since I came here. I even asked the Prime Minister one time about my mother's survivor's pension, but that's another story.

It took me several years to realize what "unfunded liability" meant. It meant that the money was not there. After asking questions of the railway officers, listening to actuaries and officials from Health and Welfare, it finally dawned on me that all that meant was that the money was not there. It was what the railroads owed if every employee they had retired the next day, which everybody knows would never happen, could never happen.