

Suggested Pension Payment Corrections

the increase in pensions being tied absolutely to the cost of living rather than being fixed at a 2 per cent figure are so sound that they should not run into resistance intellectually, politically or of any other kind.

I should like to say also that I listened carefully to the thoughtful speech of the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken), a man who came to this house as I did, in 1957. I should like it known that in my opinion he is one of the most conscientious, most thoughtful and most highly qualified members of this house, and it ill behooves anyone on the treasury benches or elsewhere to question his motives or the purpose of his interventions on behalf of the people whom he represents. If Cardinal Newman's definition of a gentleman, that he is never mean nor little in his disputes, can be applied to any man in this house, I would say it can be applied to the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. I therefore listened with no great pleasure to the innuendo hurled across the floor by the minister, perhaps in a moment of self-defence. I trust that the minister, being a gentleman, will regret that he did so.

[Translation]

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to speak on the notice of motion moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I shall not take too much of the time of the house but I have a few remarks to make which, I think, are very important if we want to keep in the eyes of the pensioners our reputation as a government which knows how to take its responsibilities.

I should like to refer in the first place to the people who receive the old age pensions, especially those who have helped build our country. If today we experience some success, it is due to a great degree to the role played by the Canadians who came before us and who made Canada a country where it is good to live.

We should recognize that these citizens have a strict right to the old age pension because they have had no reason to be satisfied with the way they have been treated in the last five or seven years when the cost of living skyrocketed. Everyone will agree that we cannot buy today with \$1 what we could buy ten years ago with about 75 cents.

Pensioners too have to buy clothes, to provide for their accommodations and to buy medicine; in short, they too have a right to live.

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

I feel that we have somehow overlooked these people who cannot complain because they have no choice; indeed we never hear from them except for the odd letter they send now and then to their member.

If we want to be considered as a civilized people, we must recognize that we owe them a lot.

It is unfortunate that the government should have been unable in the last seven or eight years to control the cost of living index. If that situation cannot be controlled, why then can the government not pass a law, once and for all, to bring the income of our pensioners in line with the cost of living, so that the cheque they get every month will correspond automatically in value to what can be bought, that is to the cost of living index.

I noticed that the minister replied in a few words for which I congratulate him because he understands the problem. I know he will discuss it with his colleagues. This act should provide for an income that corresponds with the cost of living index, so that all Canadian citizens can live decently in this beautiful country we all love.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for South Western Nova.

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You really caught me by surprise. I thought the hon. member would speak longer than he did. I wish to speak on this motion for the simple reason that it is of great interest to many of my constituents and many people across Canada. This debate centres around the subject we discussed last Friday.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) and others have referred to many statistics to indicate the increased amounts paid to old age and other pensioners during the past five years. It is easy to refer to these figures. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that assistance has been increased in the past five years. It should also be remembered that even during the Tory years from 1957 to 1962 social assistance was increased. So hon. members can see that everybody is concerned about this question. I include the New Democratic Party since they have talked about it on many occasions. But the fact that we are concerned is no excuse for not increasing benefits further.