

Pensions

Revenue and the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) to keep on putting off the matter. The time for action on this issue is now, in this very session of parliament. Action has been taken on a good many other things. This kind of action on behalf of the retired civil servants cannot be held off any longer. I hope the house will be ready to pass this motion today. If so, I am sure that we will express our opinion that something ought to be done. Whether or not that decision is made, I insist that the minister's commitment of last Friday must be kept, and that this matter of increasing the pensions of retired civil servants must be referred to the joint committee on the public service. I hope and believe that out of that consideration there will come a recommendation and that the government will act at this session so that these people can start to have their right to live in their well-earned retirement, and so that we can establish the principle that people who retire have rights which do not end when they retire. I urge that this motion be allowed to pass.

Mr. G. L. Chatterton (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I too will be very brief in order to allow this question to come to a vote. I am quite sure if that is done there will be a unanimous opinion that retired civil servants and retired members of the armed forces and the R.C.M.P. should have the support of the members of this house.

The hon. member for Victoria, B.C. (Mr. Groos) suggested that the question was whether the fund established for public service superannuation could stand an increase in the amount paid to retired civil servants. To me, Mr. Speaker, this is not the question. In 1959 a bill was introduced to provide an increase in pension for those civil servants who were retired. The question is simply this: Does the government of the day hold itself responsible for the plight of its retired employees? I maintain that good employers today do accept this responsibility. If the government accepts this responsibility toward its retired civil servants, then a way will be found to fulfil it by making amendments to the Public Service Superannuation Act or by introducing a special act. But it can be done.

● (6:40 p.m.)

There is no question of the need, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to go into figures to demonstrate the need of the retired employees of the government. The question simply is: Is there the will to accept the

responsibility as an employer toward ex-employees? If the will is there the way can be found. I stop now to allow the house to vote, and I am sure the vote will be unanimous.

Mr. Howard Johnston (Okanagan-Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, I too will be brief. I agree with the mover and with the hon. members who have spoken in favour of this motion. I also agree with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) and his statement that many problems which we are facing today are problems of prosperity. But this particular problem is right at the crux of the problems of prosperity.

The worker who is organized and has a powerful union is able to change his financial position. This has become dramatically apparent in the last few days with the very large wage increases which have been granted workers to solve various labour disputes in this country. A corporation has power, in effect, to tax consumers for its expansion and additional cost of operation. We have evidence of that power every time the cost of living index figures are published. Always the people who suffer from such action are those on fixed incomes such as those about whom we are talking this evening.

One could, of course, mention the plight of our old age security pensioners, and perhaps there is a priority need there. But anyone on a fixed income is caught in this position in a period of inflation such as the present.

There is no use at all telling Canadians at the present time to save. There is very little use in suggesting this is advisable when they see what happens to people who have saved and contributed to pension funds and then come out on the short end because of inflation.

We know that inflation is inevitable until the nations of the world, including ourselves, have solved the problem of distributing their productive capacities. In a way we have to keep inflating the value of our money, reducing its purchasing power annually. We also indirectly become involved in races to the moon. In this country we must be prepared to build a war tower which is going to be higher than the Peace Tower. A great many devices are used to siphon off the productive capacity of which we are now capable.

Repeatedly we find that the government has had a hand in the inflationary spiral through its own taxation policies. I cite here by way of example the tax on production