

*Pensions*

**Miss Bégin:** I think the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) must be an NDP member in a hurry because the contents of the motion he put before us for debate this afternoon on this opposition day is quite different from the program of the NDP which was put forward before the Canadian public during the last federal election campaign in January and February of 1980. This has to be reconciled. In any event, I cannot accuse the hon. member because he has been a key player in pushing governments, year after year and decade after decade, toward a better pension for Canadians. I cannot really accuse his party of not being concerned and having a position on pensions, but I cannot say that for all political parties in this chamber.

● (1600)

On January 23, 1980, the New Democratic Party published its political platform on pensions. The views of members of that party are different from ours, as are some of their priorities. They recommended a general, quite substantial increase of \$40 per month for every pensioner in Canada through the basic old age pension. They did not refer in their document to increasing the tax portion of the money which must be paid back by rich pensioners; they did not touch upon this area in their document. Therefore, they want an expenditure which will be well over \$1 billion. Without giving any details, they indicated that they would readjust the GIS, the supplement. Also they referred to a shelter allowance for senior citizens; I think it was called a shelter grant for pensioners in need. It was their priority. This would add another \$1 billion to the actual system.

As a second step, they very clearly identified a complete reform of the private pension system based on four principles which were identical to the ones set out in the speech of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) of April, 1979. We do not quarrel with the principles. In fact, we added one principle, the concept of flexibility in the age of retirement. But during the last public debate on the question, members of the NDP did not speak of enlarging the Canada Pension Plan, of doubling it, or increasing it in whatever way possible.

When the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre launched the debate on his motion today, he did not tell us—and I suspect I know why—by how much he wanted the CPP increased. He did not tell us whether it should be increased all at once, over several years, or when it should be done.

I realize it is a serious problem. The workers of Canada, if it is the route chosen, will have to pay a portion of that large increase, but this as yet has never been discussed with them. This is why we want a national conference to start discussing together what I call the updating of an old social contract; the relationship, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said, between salaries and what will come from where in terms of retirement income and who will pay for these layers of future retirement income.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre gave his own view today. It is different from the one of his party, unless his

party has updated the document which was part of its platform exactly a year ago. I do not know the views of the Tory party on pensions. The only thing Canadians know is that in their budget over a year ago, they wanted to give \$40 to senior citizens in need for the first year in the form of a tax credit for heating costs, and \$80 in the second year for the same reason.

I should like to put before Canadians the views of the political party which forms the government, since we were elected by them, on a subject matter which was discussed throughout the country during the last election campaign, namely, our platform regarding pensions. We differ with the NDP. Of course, it is not difficult to differ with the Tory party because, as I said, I have never heard them discuss pensions much. It is a social issue and usually they do not feel very comfortable with social issues. We have put our concept of what we think should be the retirement income in the country and our priorities to the Canadian population, and we will be putting it forward again during the conference next week.

An ideal retirement income—and this is the only concept which was offered and never questioned, to my knowledge, by specialists—must be equivalent to average industrial wages which are now over \$16,000.

**Mr. Knowles:** Hear, hear!

**Miss Bégin:** Now, what will form that income for Canadians? We want the first layer to be the basic old age pension, as it is now. It is not the full 15 per cent; it is approximately 13.5 per cent of the average industrial wage. We want to keep it the way it is and continue to save the value of the dollar by determined indexation every three months.

On top of that, Canadians receive about an additional 25 per cent in the form of their CPP cheques. The way the Canadian Pension Plan is now, when it has matured and is at the maximum it amounts to an additional 25 per cent of their ideal retirement income. These two cheques account for 40 per cent. The questions are: From where will the balance of the money come? Who will issue the cheque for the missing 60 per cent? Who pays?

This is the purpose of the conference, this is the question on which we want to focus. Usually it is assumed that approximately 10 per cent must come from the private savings of a person which were put aside during one's working life. Then there is the remaining 50 per cent on which we want to focus. We think a large portion of it must come from one's private pension from the company where one worked. This is the *raison d'être* of the conference which will take place Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week in Ottawa with approximately 300 participants.

[*Translation*]

We believe, if I speak now of reforms which should be made, that the situation is as follows. The basic old age security benefits that every Canadian receives would still be indexed quarterly as is now the case. However, when the pensioner does not have a sufficient income, he must necessarily ask for the guaranteed income supplement. We know and we have