

*The Address—Mr. Stanley Knowles*

have the same principle in the Canada Pension Plan. But in both those cases we have put on the 2 per cent ceiling to which I referred a few moments ago, which means that the increases people get do not reflect the over-all increase in the cost of living.

But I am pleading for more than that. I am pleading for more than just a sufficient increase in pensions, whether they be for retired people generally or retired civil servants, to cover increased costs. I am pleading for more than just enough to keep their purchasing power up to what it was; that would only enable them to buy the same basket of goods and services that they did on retirement. I am pleading for the opportunity for them to participate in the rising standard of living, in improved social conditions, the affluent society, and the rest of it. These people may be retired now, but it was their effort and work which brought this country to where it was when they retired. They laid the foundation for what we now enjoy. Therefore, surely they have the right to participate in the improvements that take place during their years of retirement.

We hear a lot about the just society. We hear a lot about humanitarian instincts. Let us apply these instincts to the young, the middle-aged, the working people and all our citizens. For God's sake let us apply them to the people who are starving in Biafra, but let us not forget this tremendous body of people in our own land, namely our retired population. According to the figures of the Department of National Health and Welfare, there are about one and a quarter million people on old age security, and in view of the fact that this is a universal program this would be the number of Canadians 77 years of age or over. Amongst those one and a quarter million people are far too many who are below the poverty line, and at the point where even subsistence is difficult.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge as strongly as I can that the two ministers to whom I have been addressing my remarks thus far, namely the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the Minister of Finance, bring in this session proposals regarding these two matters, that is, an increase in the old age security pension and increases in the pensions of our federal superannuates.

• (5:30 p.m.)

The third group on whose behalf I wish to speak in these few remarks this afternoon is that group of veterans whose income consists

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

in the main of war veterans allowance. I am delighted to have the attention and the ear of the new Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé). I forgive him for his answer to me the other day when I asked whether the matter of the War Veterans Allowance Act would be referred to any committee dealing with veterans affairs, because, after all, he is a new minister. He said to me that whatever terms of reference that committee would have, would have to be decided by the house. He knows that any motion giving the committee its terms of reference, although it has to be passed by the house, would have to be drafted and brought in by the minister. I am pleading with him, if he is not prepared to bring in legislation of his own, to see to it that this subject is referred to any committee which deals with veterans affairs.

Much has been said lately about the report of the Woods committee. It is a very interesting document. Far be it from me to claim that I have read it all. I have a copy of it and it stands about a foot and a half high. The veterans organizations have welcomed it, but it deals exclusively with the administration of the pension legislation which relates to disability pensions. It does not deal at all with the War Veterans Allowance Act, which is the legislation to which veterans have to resort if they do not have actual disabilities on the basis of which to claim their pensions. As we all know, disability pensions are granted without any means test. On the other hand, allowances under the War Veterans Allowance Act are subject to a means test. I find that generally veterans across this country find it hard to accept the fact that other people receive their old age pension and their income supplements in addition to whatever income they may already have, but when a veteran living on the war veterans allowance receives his old age security pension or his guaranteed income supplement, he receives it as a matter of right but it comes off his war veterans allowance in accordance with the means test. I recognize that veterans living on the war veterans allowance as well as the old age security pension, the guaranteed income supplement and the small amount of the war veterans allowance which they get, are receiving a little more than some others. However, I do not think this is good enough in relation to the debt this country owes them, and to the principles that were established with regard to the War Veterans Allowance Act.

As I have said many a time, most of the correspondence which I receive as a member