

Supply—Finance

however appeal to him to do with regard to this issue what he knows really must be done.

I should like to remind the minister that on Monday of last week this subject came up in three separate questions on the orders of the day. The hon. member for Malpeque asked the Minister of National Defence whether something would be done soon to bring the pensions of retired servicemen into line with those that are paid in relation to present pay scales. The Minister of National Defence replied that he hoped something could be done on the matter in the spring. Realizing as I did that the pensions of retired members of the armed forces, retired members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and retired civil servants generally are all of a piece, I followed with supplementary questions to two other ministers, namely the Minister of Finance and the Solicitor General. The Minister of Finance gave me the assurance I have had so often, that this matter is continually being studied. The Solicitor General said he would like to take the question as notice so that he could give a fully accurate answer. I do not quarrel with either of those ministers for not making a precise statement on Monday, November 25, in view of the way in which the question followed one after the other.

• (4:00 p.m.)

However, I do stand here today urging the Minister of Finance, recognizing as I do that these three things are in one basket, to expedite action in respect of this matter in relation to federal superannuates generally, retired armed services people and retired R.C.M.P. personnel.

Not so long ago, on Monday, November 18, I spoke on another set of estimates and I went into this question in detail. I shall not do so today, but I dare to believe that those who have to follow these matters have looked at the remarks I made on that occasion. I might even dare to hope that they may have been drawn to the attention of the Minister of Finance. He knows, however, of the many studies which have been made in respect of this matter by various departments of government, by members of parliament and by the special committee which dealt with it in 1967, and he knows the hopes that have been raised that action will be taken on this matter. These hopes were raised in particular by the unanimous recommendation of the joint committee which made its report to parliament on May 8, 1967. I put the terms of that recommendation on the record on Monday, November 18, and they include a special proposal

that there be increases in the pensions of these three groups of retired government employees forthwith.

The Minister of Finance also knows, as I said on Monday, November 18, what he said to me during the month of May. He knows what he told me as to when he expected the legislation to be brought in and when he thought it would be passed. I suspect that he also knows what the former prime minister told me as to when action on that report would be effected. That date has long since gone by, and we have had this issue up time and again since then. I know the Minister of Finance will still take the position that he thinks something should be done but that it cannot be done in light of present conditions. I suggest to him that the good name of parliament, the whole question of how parliamentary committees operate and whether their operations are worth anything at all, and the responsibility of the government to be a good employer, calls for early action on this issue.

One of the arguments, of course, that is sometimes used against acting on this issue at all is that this a matter of concern to all retired people, not just retired government employees. That, in fact, is the standard line used in letters that go out to retired civil servants from the Prime Minister's office and from other offices, namely that this matter has to be looked at not in respect of these groups alone, but in respect of all groups of retired people. I fully agree. Not only do I agree; this is something I have been asserting for a long time. But I suggest the federal government has a particular responsibility to its own employees so far as their position is concerned, and also has a responsibility to give leadership in this issue.

It is not often I find myself wanting to send the Minister of Finance a copy of part of the *Financial Post*, but I have one here on which I have written "Mr. Benson". I have autographed it with my signature and I intend to send it over to him. The other day when one of my colleagues was directing a question about a matter of financial policy the Minister of Finance retorted that he was surprised to see the N.D.P. and a chartered bank in an alliance. I suppose he will now be surprised to find me in alliance with the *Financial Post*. Of course, this is the other way around: The *Financial Post* has caught up with me. May I just take a moment to indicate—

Mr. Stanfield: It is time somebody did.