

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

move forward in social security. If we are to move forward, that means an improvement in the pensions of our citizens who are on old age security. If that is the case, why wait for all these white papers and all the machinery we have to go through? Why not bring in now a proposal for an interim increase in the old age security pension? That is the second and the major part of the question I raise at this time, and I hope the parliamentary secretary is in a position to give a hopeful or favourable answer to it tonight.

Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, at the outset in replying to the hon. member I should like to point out that this government, and especially the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro), have not remained idle in trying to help as much as possible the older citizens of our country. If we look at the estimates for the fiscal year 1970-71 we will see that expenditures under the old age security fund have jumped \$143 million, reaching a total of \$1.9 billion, which is the highest in our history.

This increase is explained by two main factors. On the one hand there has been the lowering of the required age; consequently, an estimated additional 50,000 people will be benefiting from the basic flat rate and the income supplement. On the other hand, while in the past old age security had no escalation, the fact is that that we now have some escalation in benefits. This escalation has permitted many of our older citizens to benefit.

Finally, I should like to point out to the hon. member that the federal government is prepared to share half the cost of further supplementing the old age security and guaranteed income supplement through the Canada Assistance Plan. At least one of the provinces has recently increased this supplement and brought the total amount of the benefits up to \$150 a month. I also wish to add that there is no upper limit to the federal government's contribution through the Canada Assistance Plan; however, the initiative must come from the provinces which also determine the amount of supplement to be paid.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, may I emphasize that this government through its Minister of National Health and Welfare is doing all that is possible at the moment to help our old age pensioners while studying the situation and deciding upon its policy, which will be

made known through the white paper on social security and which will, I hope, be tabled as soon as possible. I will again bring the matter of the tabling of the Willard report to the attention of the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I hope that on his return from the Indian reserves, the minister will be able to make a decision and announce it to the House.

CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION—
REQUEST BY UNION OFFICIAL FOR
APOLOGY BY MINISTER

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape-Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, on January 27, as reported at page 2861 of *Hansard*, I posed a question to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) with reference to written complaints from the retired coal miners pensioners union at Sydney Mines, signed by their secretary, Mr. Pius Hennessey, regarding the manner in which pre-retirement benefits were being paid by the Cape Breton Development Corporation to former coal mine employees. At that time I asked whether in view of the constant complaints that were being received the Prime Minister would cause an investigation to be carried out into all the ramifications of the subject. The Prime Minister took my question as notice.

On January 29, as reported at page 2963 of *Hansard*, I again brought the subject to the attention of the Prime Minister with reference to an investigation into the whole matter because of further protests from the CB of RT. The Prime Minister did not seem to be aware of the subject, and a hazy reply was received from the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey). As a supplementary, I pointed out that continuing telegrams of protest and other communications were being forwarded to myself and ministers concerned, and I then directed a question to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) asking if he would cause an investigation to be made into the whole matter.

The minister replied that he had been in touch with Devco and that no complaints had been made either to Devco or to his department. He went on to say that the union to which I referred was "in fact a small group of superannuated employees which is called a union and which has no connection with the United Mine Workers of America who have made no request in the name of those pensioners." This, of course, is a translation of the minister's words.