

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

the federal government is concerned is with its own retired employees. I am talking now about something more than just a 2 per cent cost of living bonus such as is added to the old age security pension and the Canadian Pension Plan benefit. I am talking about the basic principle of escalating pensions, a principle that we will have to adopt, I believe, across the board.

Because I believe that action is going to be taken some day—indeed, I believe that something may be done during this very session—why not take some interim action on behalf of these people now? To tell these people that they must wait until this grand review of social welfare and social security has taken place is condemning a few more hundred or so of them to die without seeing an increase.

Mr. Speaker, some kind of a plan for escalating pensions is going to come. I suspect that this plan will amount to more than just an ad hoc addition to the pensions that are being paid. I suspect that it will be a plan of escalation that will apply both to those who are now retired and to those who will be retiring in the years that lie ahead. If a plan of some sort is coming, why not give those who are retired now and who are in great need the benefit of it by an interim arrangement? Such an addition could provide an amount no more than the government might have in mind for the future, so that no paying back would be required. But surely in light of the fact that something is going to be done in the months or years that lie ahead, an interim arrangement for those now retired should be made right now.

There are many thousands of these people who feel their position very deeply and sorely. They see not only the cost of living going up and the value of their pensions decreasing; they see people who are retiring now, after doing the jobs that they did 20, 15 years ago or even more recently, retiring on much larger pensions than they receive. They see the much higher salaries that people are getting in those jobs today and they feel that the employer that they served is not being fair to them. I share their view. I express my complete confidence that the government is going to act on this question some day, that these pensions are going to be increased, but please, Mr. President of the Treasury Board, can we not take some interim action now in favour of those who are already retired?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to give an answer to the heartfelt plea of the hon.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

member who has to some degree both asked the question and provided himself with the answer. I think he is as aware, as I am, that there is an inequality and an inequity and that we all feel something should be done to remedy this situation. I think he is also well aware that the cause of this inequality and what has brought on this situation is that phenomenon known as inflation.

Perhaps a better method of curing the problem is to concentrate one's energies on calling a halt to inflation and putting a stop to future erosion, rather than merely trying to apply a bandage to an existing and what would continue to be a suppurating wound. As he knows, a number of us are doing our best to bring the problem of inflation under control. This calls for restraint and some sacrifice in every sector of our economy. I wish that his new associates who were proclaimed recently in Winnipeg were as enthusiastic about these restraints as perhaps some of the rest of us are.

Perhaps the best approach is to try and bring inflation under control before attempting to relieve or mitigate the symptoms and inequities that inflation brings about. It is difficult but it is one of the hard choices that those who are called upon to govern try to make. We must try to set priorities and determine what should be done first, recognizing that in each course an element of hardship and sacrifice is called for. Perhaps the hon. gentleman is fortunate in not being required to make these choices. Those who are in office do, and have done. We have set our principal target for the moment as the control or restraint of inflation. This does not mean that in the meantime energy, plans and analysis with a view to rectifying some of the injustices that inflation has brought about should not be adjusted either during the process of curing inflation or immediately following its halting.

I assured the hon. member the other day that many of these plans are going forward. I hope, like the hon. member, that we will be able to do something perhaps before we have been entirely successful in dealing with inflation as a whole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. minister but his time has expired.

HEALTH AND WELFARE—CONTROL AND
USE OF PESTICIDES

Mr. Walter Deakon (High Park): Mr. Speaker, on October 29 last I posed a question