

Adjournment Debate

In a letter to R. W. Worraker, chairman of the National Council of CN Pensioners' Associations Inc. Robert Bandeen, president and chief executive officer of Canadian National, stated in the final paragraph that he encouraged them to continue making representations to all the bodies which have some responsibility in solving the complex issue of retirement income.

I want to point out that these pensioners are in their seventies and eighties. They have no resources with which to solve the problem at all. They get the ministerial and bureaucratic run-around from some man being paid \$150,000 per year to tell them, a group of pensioners in their seventies and eighties, to find some resource to get a little bit of a pension increase. What a national disgrace this is under the Liberals!

● (2215)

Another excuse being used in this issue is the Pension Benefits Standards Act. If this act needs to be changed, it is up to the government to bring forth legislation to make amendments so the CN and CP can implement some form of indexing in increased pensions monthly, not in a small lump sum increase at the end of the year as they are doing now.

I plead with the parliamentary secretary to give a firm commitment tonight that the government will take immediate action to contact the CN and CP and at least arrange for a partial indexing of these retired railworkers low pensions.

Mr. Robert Bockstael (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has again pursued the question of railway pensions in his question on May 21. I have little to add to the frequent and, in my view, quite adequate answers he has received in the House and in correspondence.

With respect to the level of pensions, I have said before that the government fully recognizes that inflation erodes the purchasing power of a pensioner's fixed income, and is committed to finding ways of improving the pensioner's situation. The National Pension Conference was part of this effort. But the hon. member conveniently forgets the real improvements that have occurred, such as the annual increases that the CN has given since 1970 to pensioners who retired before 1973 and to their surviving spouses.

A common assumption is that the pension fund of CN is designed only to pay benefits to approximately 45,000 current recipients. If this were true, one might wonder why it could not accommodate some form of indexation. But, in fact, the fund does much more than this. Apart from refunding contributions to employees terminating service, it is required by law that there be a sufficient reserve to provide for future pensions for the 75,000 employees now in service.

The hon. member has also raised the question of the fund's investments. The Minister of Transport wrote him recently on this subject and assured him that the CN pension fund is independently administered as a vehicle for financing the obligations of the pension plan toward current or retired members or their survivors. It is not established as a vehicle for

the takeover of management control of other enterprises. The Pension Board is administered by ten members comprising five railway appointed members and five chairmen of unions representing various trades within the railway industry.

THE CONSTITUTION—PROVISION RESPECTING MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Jesse P. Flis (Parkdale-High Park): Mr. Speaker, I rise under the provisions of Standing Order 40. On Monday, November 16, 1981, in the absence of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien), I asked the Acting Prime Minister whether one of my constituents, Captain Ross Stevenson, the Air Canada pilot who obtained an injunction against Air Canada to allow him to work past the mandatory retirement age of 60 will be allowed to do so.

This is not the first time I have raised this question in the House. On May 20 of this year I moved a motion in this chamber to the effect that the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada introduce an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act which would end the imposition of early retirement. I made that motion then in light of the fact that Mr. Fairweather, Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, in his fourth annual report dated March 31, 1981, to the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, recommended to Parliament that Sections 9(2) and 14(C), allowing for the imposition of mandatory retirement, be deleted from the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The same recommendation was made by Senator Croll's special Senate committee on retirement age policies on April 15, 1980. On May 23, 1981, I asked the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) whether he would intervene in the dispute between Captain Ross Stevenson and Air Canada, allowing him to work past the age of 60. The minister clearly stated that Transport Canada has no retirement age for pilots. The only age requirement is that the applicant must be not less than 21 years of age at the time the licence is issued, and that the pilot possess an airline transport pilot's licence. Once the pilot has been issued the licence, he can continue to hold and exercise the privilege of licence, provided he can continue to meet the medical standards based on those set by ICAO, and pass periodic flight testing to demonstrate his competency.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear that Captain Ross Stevenson has passed the medical standards and has passed all flight tests with flying colours.

● (2220)

I refer you to my comments in this House on this topic on May 29 and again on June 9, 1981. I will not repeat what I said then. Hon. members listening to this debate may refer to those speeches in *Hansard*.

I raise this topic again today in the hope that the accord signed on November 5, 1981, by the federal government and nine premiers to patriate the Canadian Constitution with an amending formula and a charter of rights and freedoms will remove age discrimination in collective agreements between