

Interim Supply

(a) two-twelfths of the total of all of the items set forth in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 1969, laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament—\$1,051,635,522.17;

(b) four-twelfths of the total amount of Atomic Energy item 5 and National Research Council of Canada including the Medical Research Council item 10, (Schedule A) of the said main estimates—\$30,666,333.33;

(c) two-twelfths of the total amount of External Affairs item 35 (Schedule B) of the said main estimates—\$23,566,666.67;

(d) one-twelfth of the total amount of Office of the Chief Electoral Officer item 1, Consumer and Corporate Affairs item 25, Indian Affairs and Northern Development item 20, Legislation items 5 and 20, and Transport item 30, (Schedule C) of the said main estimates—\$12,334,275.00,

—be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 1969.

The Chairman: Shall the resolution carry?

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, before this resolution carries I should like once again to say a few words concerning what some of us regard as a very important issue, namely the question of increasing the pensions of retired civil servants. A few minutes ago when the item for the Treasury Board was called I indicated I had something to say but that I would defer my remarks until this point.

● (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Chairman, it has been something of a temptation to me today to speak to this matter with cynicism and a sense of utter despair. In fact, I am almost tempted to copy the style of the hon. member for Carleton in respect of some of the things he has said on this issue. I realize, however, that while I could express my outrage and get something off my chest, perhaps that is not the way to get something out of the government opposite. Therefore I shall refrain from that kind of approach and once again make the strongest appeal I can possibly make to the government to deal with this matter before the present session ends.

We already have the assurance that when we rise this evening we will be adjourned, not prorogued, and that when we come back on April 23 we will deal with high priority matters. I recognize that no commitment has yet been made by the government to deal with this matter among others having high priority, but I urge this is of very high priority and that it ought to be dealt with before this session is prorogued, I presume sometime toward the end of April.

I am sure you, Mr. Chairman, representing a constituency in this area, as well as your

[Mr. Pennell.]

colleague who sits to your right, the hon. member for Ottawa East, and your friend to your left, the hon. member for Carleton, as well as others, are aware of the importance of this problem. Indeed, we are terribly aware of how bitterly disappointed some 50,000 or 60,000 federal superannuates, counting retired civil servants, retired R.C.M.P. personnel and retired members of the armed forces, feel because this matter has not been dealt with before now.

I will not take the time to recount the efforts that some of us have made with regard to this matter over 20 years or more, but I do draw attention once again to the fact that the hon. member for Ottawa East tabled on May 8, 1967, a report of a joint committee of both houses on which were representatives of all parties, in which it was unanimously recommended that there be an immediate increase in the pensions of retired civil servants, including civil servants as we know them by that name, retired members of the armed forces and retired R.C.M.P. personnel.

I know it is awfully difficult to document by reference to *Hansard* the kind of promises that were made to us, but the promises were implicit in the things that were said on the floor of the house, and the promises given to us outside this house were very explicit. This matter was going to be dealt with last summer. Indeed, I was told on several occasions it was going to be dealt with before the end of June. Hon. members know that on July 7 when some of us tried to get the house to stay here to deal with this we lost the vote and we were sent home with the assurance by Liberal members that it was just a matter of waiting until the fall. We came back in September, and I suppose there has not been a week since that some of us have not raised this question, but in vain.

Shortly after the Prime Minister announced his intended resignation I began to urge him to put this matter on his personal priority list as a matter that should be dealt with before he became a retired civil servant himself. Reference was made to this today, and he suggested this gave him a vested interest. I think that hardly applies. The fact of the matter is that on Friday, December 15, 1967, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 5474 the Prime Minister told me that he hoped to be able to reconsider sympathetically this very difficult problem, and he used these words:

I hope the situation will so improve during the remainder of my period on this side as Prime Minister that this may be possible.