

Motion for Adjournment

originally by the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I have had the usual consultations in the light of the advice given to the Chair and I am now in a position to render a decision, or at least give an expression of opinion.

It seems to me there is something to what was said by the Minister of National Health and Welfare when he suggested that it is a new proposition which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre seeks to introduce in the consideration of the motion. To my mind this amendment goes even further in that to a considerable extent it is a substantive amendment raising an entirely new question and would require notice.

However, there is some doubt on this point and I might have tended to accept the amendment if there were that objection only. There is another objection which is more serious and which I take the liberty of bringing to the attention of hon. members. I would refer hon. members to Beauchesne's fourth edition, citation 260(1) which reads as follows:

The tendency has been in the Canadian House of Commons, for the past 25 years, to rule out all motions purporting to give the government a direct order to do a thing which cannot be done without the expenditure of money. Our Journals are full of precedents to this effect.

To my mind this citation is exactly on the point, and because of this I must rule the amendment out of order.

● (12:10 p.m.)

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, I should like to say just a word on the motion. The members of this party are extremely disturbed that the house should propose to adjourn for a summer recess without dealing with the matter which has been raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). The fact that the retired civil servants have over the years seen the cost of living rise annually, which has meant a diminution in the purchasing power of their pensions, has caused great distress among them, and this distress has not just been felt in the last two or three years or the last two or three months. The government has been in office for over four years.

As my colleague said, the previous government dealt with this matter and the present government, fully aware of the distress which has been caused among the retired civil servants, claims to have been studying the matter. It was referred to a joint House of Commons and Senate committee which put forward a unanimous recommendation for action. There

[Mr. Speaker.]

have been months of delay. We have been told that the matter was under active, serious and urgent consideration. Consideration has been given to it every time but no action is ever taken.

We had hoped that in view of the fact that the government had plenty of warning it would have brought in legislation to deal with this matter before the house recesses for the summer. The complexity of this legislation is no excuse. There have been plenty of precedents for this legislation and there has been plenty of time to deal with this matter. If the ministers are so busy with other matters that they think this one is less important and can be delayed, then they are wrong because the Canadian people, who have a high regard for civil servants, feel that they have an indebtedness to them and owe it to them to see that they do not suffer by virtue of the rising cost of living and that their pensions should be adjusted to meet the rising cost. Since the government has completely failed to do this, we think that the house has no right to recess until this great injustice is remedied.

Since the government refuses to act, we have no other recourse but to vote against the motion to adjourn, and not because we do not want to see the house adjourn because we recognize the need for members to return to their respective constituencies. But surely no recess is more important than the passage of a measure to relieve the distress of the retired civil servants of this country.

When the hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Byrne) speaks about blackmail because we are trying to get the government to live up to its commitments, I want to tell him that the people of Canada will not consider it blackmail and that anybody who can get this government to keep its promises is doing a public service.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Douglas: When the hon. member for Kootenay East says it is blackmail of the taxpayers, I challenge the government to ask the taxpayers of Canada whether they want to upgrade the pensions of the retired civil servants of this country. Let the government not blame the taxpayers. The government is not covering up for the taxpayers; it is trying to cover up for its own inability, inefficiency and failure to grapple with a problem whose solution is long overdue.

Mr. Churchill: Will the hon. member permit a question? Now that he has displayed his