

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

I may remind the House also that in the Speech from the Throne last October this was one of the highlights, the tabling of a white paper on social security. But, Mr. Speaker, it gets put off and off and off and it has been made very clear that nothing will be done for our old age pensioners until we have this white paper. It has also been made clear that nothing will be done about the rate of pensions for veterans under the Pensions Act or the rate of war veterans allowances until after we have had this white paper. Therefore the tabling of this white paper becomes extremely important, and I regard it as most unfair to the pensioners of this country and to our veterans that the publishing of this white paper has been delayed, delayed and delayed.

• (10:00 p.m.)

I suppose the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Haidasz) knows my style in these "late shows". I return the compliment; I know his. He will stand up and tell us about all the things which have been done in the pension field by this government. He will tell us of the close and intensive study going on, of the great concern and of the bleeding hearts there are on the other side, but that our old age pensioners will have to wait. This comes very strangely from a government that, when it went to the country in 1968, promised action. We had to speed things up, to streamline the procedures of Parliament. But for something important like pension increases, we must wait.

On Wednesday, May 6, 1970, a newspaper published in the city of my hon. friend, the Parliamentary Secretary, carried an editorial on what this government is doing about pensioners. The paper is strongly Liberal; certainly, at election time it always supports the Liberal cause. I want to read two or three quotations from the editorial. It begins by saying:

In some primitive societies it was the custom during times of famine to throttle babies and set the old out to die, the idea being that the weak must be sacrificed to ensure the survival of the many. It was a cruel and ugly practice, but it had one thing on its side. It was biologically sound.

It's not so easy to excuse the old custom when it re-emerges, only slightly modified, during times of economic difficulty in a rich modern society such as ours. Pushing the weak aside in favor of the strong has lost its biological justification. It is cruel and ugly and nothing else.

After making the assertion that we no longer throttle babies, except that in some

districts of Toronto they die off much faster than in other districts, and after saying that instead of setting the old out to die we set them out to languish with pensions that grow more inadequate with each passing day, the editorial concludes with its final paragraph. I emphasize that these are not my words; this is not my impatience, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) described it the other day: these are the words of the Toronto *Daily Star*:

It's not much of an improvement over the primitive custom when you come right down to it. And it's a crying shame. Someone should kick that government of ours in the pants over its indifference to the victims of inflation and keep on kicking until it promises to help them.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the least this government can do is bring down the white paper on social security and get moving. I hope the Parliamentary Secretary will not give us another of his implausible excuses tonight.

**Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) I should like to assure the House that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) is most concerned about the needy people in our country. He has already devoted considerable time and effort to the study of this problem. The preparation of any thorough review of social security involves a great deal of research, comparison and evaluation of existing programs in Canada and elsewhere. Such a study also involves the investigation of regional disparities and the economy as a whole.

We know the urgency of the problem, the inadequacies of some programs, and that there is personal distress. However, compassion and sympathy will not solve the difficulties unless supported by a good and workable program of social security. When social legislation is enacted, it must be the best we can possibly devise. I can assure the hon. member that this matter is receiving the greatest attention and the highest priority and that the white paper on social security will be tabled with all the speed compatible with a good, useful and workable program. I reiterate the minister's statement. It is the government's intention to table in this House a white paper on social security prior to the end of the present session.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** But not in time for action during this session.