

Old Age Security

that will not go away. The whole question is not just one that some of us like to talk about because we have been talking about it for years and cannot get over it. We think it is part and parcel of the whole idea that used to be known as the just society, if that phrase has not been spoiled. We think it is part and parcel of the idea of a decent, humane society, in which our older people are not just kept alive but in which they can enjoy the dignity, the honour and the respect that are possible because of the work they have done and of the wealth that our economy is able to produce.

We shall support this little bill, Mr. Speaker, because what it does is the least that can possibly be done at this time. But we plead with the government and we plead with this House to realize that the pension problem calls for a lot more than has been done. Some of us are going to keep talking about it until we get a full measure of justice and security for all our older people.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, it is with deep satisfaction that I heard this evening the speeches of the spokesmen of the various parties in the House, because we seem to be heading at great speed towards the acknowledgment of human rights. I am greatly pleased, because there was a time when any reference to the rights of senior citizens, disabled persons, families or children seemed like preaching in the wilderness. However, at the present time, there seems to be a consensus which is heart-warming, as we all wish to bring greater security to older people and are ready to do so not only because of an election, but due to a rapidly changing situation.

Bill C-219 now under consideration precisely provides for an increase in the pension of people of 65 or over, according to their needs and the rise in the cost of living.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, whenever an increase in the cost of living is mentioned, a great many people think of an increase in food costs. They feel that these are the only costs which contribute to the cost of living increase, that is, everything we eat to rebuild our strength and live. Yet, there are many other factors which contribute to the cost of living increase which, although very important, are rarely mentioned.

I was very much interested in the statement which the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made this afternoon and which, at times, sounded like a Speech from the Throne, in view of the various measures presented to hon. members who are urged to pass them in order to remedy a number of situations.

For example, when I heard that part of the remarks dealing with the increase in the price of gasoline, I was very interested because a couple of weeks ago I did in fact say in a press release that the increase in price of gasoline by the great oil magnates did contribute much to the increase in the cost of living these people were not forced to crawl in front of control boards to get higher prices as must do, for example, whole milk producers. In fact, the latter must submit a request to provincial control boards to ask permission to raise the price of their milk according to the contingencies of production costs so that they may

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

realize profits and keep operating. Once again, we have a policy for the rich and a policy for the poor.

As for the increase in gas prices, these magnates only have to decide, at a given time, that they are more hungry than yesterday and they boost their prices. It is an accomplished fact. All newspapers announce that the price of gasoline has risen by 2 cents, 3 cents or 5 cents and that is what contributes, to a great extent, to the higher cost of living because everyday we only have to watch, to see what happens on our roads, in our towns, everywhere, to understand that more and more gasoline is used for all sorts of things, to do things that will bring satisfaction or will give something likely to satisfy the needs of human beings.

Mr. Speaker, another thing greatly contributes to the rise in the cost of living; we hear very little about, at least it is not given much attention. This afternoon, I heard, the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Lewis) utter a very short sentence. Then I heard our leader (Mr. Caouette) who mentioned what he has repeated again and again: the rise in interest rates leads to a much higher cost of living, and here again the government seems powerless facing those who enjoy the privilege of controlling credit and to determine the interest rates on the money loaned to the Canadian taxpayers, to the large corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I intend to come back on that subject at a certain moment when we will make a thorough study of related matters in order to demonstrate once and for all—if it is possible—to all Canadians, to consumers and producers that farmers have some rights, they can exist and they have a mission to fulfill in Canada, that they must produce what is necessarily to appease appetites, to fill stomachs, that they have well-established rights, that they must be recognized and they are not responsible for the rise in the cost of living.

Once again, I would like to point out to all Canadian consumers that it is their interest to help farmers have their rights recognized so that they can continue to produce the necessary foods to meet the needs of the people; if we do not move right now, I am afraid the reduction in farm production will be accelerating and young people will no longer be interested in our most essential industry, the farm industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like also to call the attention of the House to the fact that many aged persons sent letters and telegrams to us, phoned us to let us know their needs and their hopes for more generous pensions.

• (2150)

Without reading them, I only wish to mention some of the letters received recently. I suppose that all members receive such mail. This means that older people ask their representatives to pass measures which will ensure their security, a security which they certainly deserve after their many years of work. As a matter of fact they used their energies, their power to achieve something in our country like clearing a farm, building a house or promoting an industry, building a railway, a road or a plane. Thanks to their energy, all these people have worked, often under very difficult conditions, giving their best to build a Canada in which they hoped to live happy years at