

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the house under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

PUBLIC SERVICE—SUPERANNUATED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES—REQUEST FOR INCREASED PENSIONS

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, February 4, as reported at page 5113 of *Hansard*, I asked the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) whether certain sums of money in the estimates for the ensuing fiscal year which he had tabled that day, moneys which were to be placed in certain superannuation accounts, would be used to increase the pensions of civil servants already retired.

In his reply, the President of the Treasury Board said this was not the case but that these sums were for the purpose of covering certain actuarial deficiencies. He ended his answer with these precise words:

I regret to say that as yet no decision has been taken to make additional funds available to superannuates.

I asked a supplementary question, but got nowhere with it. Then a week later, on February 11, as reported on page 5372, I asked another question on this subject and got the answer that has been given us hundreds of times, namely that the matter was still under consideration. In fact, on February 11 we were told it was under serious consideration.

A few days later, on February 17, one of my questions on the order paper was answered and the answer is to be found on pages 5572 and 5573. It gave some interesting statistics. Among other things, the figures told us the number of retired civil servants and the number of widows of civil servants who have been dying in recent years. If hon. members will look at these tables they will discover that the rate seems to be established at a little over 1,500 retired civil servants and a little over 500 widows of civil servants who are dying each year. This means that in the year and nine months since May 8, 1967, when a unanimous report was tabled calling for action to raise the pensions of retired civil servants forthwith, a total of 2,625 retired civil servants have died and a total of 875 widows of civil servants have died. That makes a grand total of 3,500. This figure does

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard).]

not include pensioners of the armed forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and so on.

• (10:00 p.m.)

A little earlier this evening, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford) admitted his personal regret that a bill he was speaking to at that moment had not been brought in five years ago. He said that it was too bad people had been hurt during the past five years in accidents, or had lost their lives, as a result of the absence of the kind of legislation being discussed in the house this evening.

I submit that if the government is sincere in that position and really does regret that the absence of that kind of legislation has resulted in people losing their lives, then the government ought to be concerned about the fact that, while it is stalling on this question of increasing the pensions of retired civil servants, every month another 125 retired civil servants die without getting the increases that were promised them. Similarly every month another 40 widows die without getting the promised increases. Surely, this is not something of which the government can be proud.

The government continues to say that it is giving the matter serious consideration, to tell the house time and time again, as no doubt the parliamentary secretary will tell the house tonight, that there is concern about this matter in all quarters of the house. I will no doubt be told that the member for Winnipeg North Centre is not the only one concerned; there is concern everywhere. While this concern is being spread around, these people are dying without having had the advantage of the increase in their pensions that was recommended by the joint parliamentary committee nearly two years ago and which the government has said through all these months that it has been considering.

There is not time in the late show period—indeed I do not need to do so because I have done it so often—to make the arguments as to the rights that these people have and as to the obligation of the government to maintain the standard of living it promised these people. I again plead the force of the argument that a joint committee representing all parties in both houses has unanimously recommended on May 8, 1967, that action be taken forthwith. How much longer, Mr. Speaker, are we going to have to wait before that action is taken?