

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

The hon. member asked several questions. He asked why the project had been dropped. The project had been in progress for some years inspired by Dr. Wellington, a much more senior gentleman who left the federal forest service last year and went to work for the University of Toronto. In other words, the project was leaderless. This was one of the main reasons it was dropped. It was dropped, also, because it was rated by this joint committee of representatives of industry and the other interests concerned as being at the bottom of a very long list.

In our economy moves involving capital expenditure we are reducing the effort by something of the order of 5 per cent only. We are not dropping every project. We are certainly not dropping any of the projects which were at the head of the list. The hon. member asked whether this was the most important project, or whether it had seniority. Essentially we were engaged in an assessment of projects and once this project was adjudged to be at the bottom of the list, substantially without direction, without guidance from the man who began it and guided it for a number of years, it was considered one of the least desirable.

The hon. member mentioned morale. The pay in the service today is comparable with the pay anywhere in industry. An individual who leaves the federal forest service today and goes to work in a university or in industry does suffer some dislocation. But there are plenty of opportunities for young Dr. Mansingh who was employed for the first time by the service in 1967 and whose job came to an end this summer. He will not be leaving the service until January 31. I understand he is very competent and that there are plenty of opportunities for him to obtain suitable employment elsewhere.

PENSIONS—RETIRED CIVIL SERVANTS—
INQUIRY AS TO INCREASE

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, October 28, as reported in *Hansard* at page 160, I addressed a question to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) as follows:

Last Wednesday when I asked the Prime Minister a question about certain pensions, including the pensions of retired civil servants, he suggested to me that I should wait until I had seen the Speech from the Throne. Since there is nothing in the Speech from the Throne about pensions for retired civil servants, may I ask the President of the Treasury Board whether the government will soon be in a position to announce an increase in these pensions?

The reply of the President of the Treasury Board was as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that in the not-too-distant future it will be possible as a consequence of the progress in the general review to make a statement in respect of the pensions of superannuates.

There followed a supplementary question and a further answer which left us just about where we were. So here we are again tonight, the President of the Treasury Board and I, discussing one of our favourite subjects—one of mine in any case. I imagine that he and others probably feel like saying to me: Do we have to do this all over again? have we not had enough questions and late shows and debates and arguments about the pensions of retired civil servants? I wish there was no need to carry it on. I wish the matter could be settled. I wish these people could get their place in the just society and that we could turn to other matters. However, I am afraid it is true that if we did not keep up the battle for these people, they would soon be forgotten. So tonight I appeal again to the President of the Treasury Board in the calm and sober quiet of this adjournment period to give us an assurance that something will soon be done to increase the pensions of our federal superannuates, including all those who are covered by that term.

● (10:10 p.m.)

With the passing of time many of these people who believed that something would be done to improve their position have passed on. As a matter of fact, the rate of deaths among retired civil servants is about 1,500 a year. That means that 2,000 of them have died since the election in June, 1968, and 3,250 have died since May 8, 1967, the date when a report was tabled in parliament urging that something be done to increase their pensions forthwith. The minister knows what was in that report. He probably knows its contents every well now because he has told us a good many times that the matter is being studied.

May I put my appeal to him tonight in these terms. I know that sooner or later something is going to be done; this issue cannot be left unresolved forever. Indeed, I for one will not let it. Some day the question of dealing with these and other pensions by escalating them after retirement is going to be an accepted principle, something that is going to be put into general practice.

I confidently believe that one of the places where this practice will get started as far as