

Pension Act and Other Acts

ture. I would invite the hon. member to be more specific in his remarks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, I was discussing the bill before the House and referring to recent statements of the Premier and the Minister of Social Affairs of Quebec.

What made me stray from the subject was the questions put by my friend, the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette). Of course, I tried to reply to the best of my ability. I say, however, that if he really has the interests of Quebecers at heart he should, I suggest, take into account the objectives of the Quebec government.

When that government stated that the increases of old age security pensions and veterans pensions have disrupted an integrated plan the government of Quebec intended to implement, all the Quebec members of this House—

Mr. Caouette: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Témiscamingue is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, we have before us Bill C-208, which is directly related to veterans. Actually, the statements of the Premier and the Minister of Social Affairs of Quebec were not related to the bill before us and did not even mention it. The bill on old age security pensions is not now before the House and I suggest the hon. member for Charlevoix—I bear him no ill feeling, far from it, he is a good friend of mine—should confine himself to the content of Bill C-208, purporting an increase of war veterans' pensions. When we get around to the old age security pension bill, I might then applaud the hon. member for Charlevoix.

Mr. Asselin: I made these remarks, Mr. Speaker, because my hon. colleague who just interrupted me forced me to do so. And as I am not the kind of man to backout I wanted to refute his arguments.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, that we definitely welcome the increase of the general pensions to elderly people as well as to veterans. And I repeat what I said earlier. If the government has moved, it is because we have been trying for three years to convince it that the people covered by Bill C-208 were not having an adequate income.

What I do not like is the fact that it waited till the eve of the general elections—

An hon. Member: You are so right.

Mr. Asselin: —to bring in a bill in order to get votes.

I say that our society has reached a higher maturity level than ever before. It is no longer possible to tell the electorate after distributing goodies on the eve of a federal election: "We shall grant an increase in such and such an area and get all the votes."

At this time, I wish to advise the government that, if they wanted to use this as an election bait, they are completely mistaken, for our people have changed more than they think. They have come of age politically: they can read and listen; now they are able to weigh, analyse and

judge this government not on its election budget, but on its achievements during its four year mandate.

And since during that mandate, a great many people had to suffer considerably because of the unemployment situation, they will not readily disregard the fact that, regardless of these increased pensions to the aged and the veterans, this administration cannot redeem all its mistakes with an election budget.

In this perspective, I say that we are in favour of the increase but I am still warning the government that it is deluding itself if it thinks that all the social and economic errors made during four years will be forgotten and that, just before the federal election, the increase in pensions will have everybody thinking: "Even if the government was wrong during four years, it will still get our support."

I see in front of me one of the most important ministers, the hon. Minister for Veterans Affairs (Mr. Laing) and I want him to know that he is not really thinking about the veterans because they are receiving just before the election that might be held on July 17, a very meagre increase considering their services to the country for the safeguard of democracy and freedom, not only here in Canada, but also abroad.

The minister should not be deceived into thinking, Mr. Chairman, that such a low increase of the veterans pensions will incite them all to vote for a government that for four years forgot about their sufferings, their devotion and their efforts to save democracy.

[*English*]

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, with the customary brevity of my party, I believe I can express my ideas in about one minute. I wish to say three things. First, I want to thank hon. members who have spoken for having recognized the long-standing efforts of my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), in trying to improve the conditions, pensions and benefits of our veterans. Second, I want to welcome the proposal which the government has brought forward, which will at least bring veterans benefits into some sort of line with the ever increasing cost of living. If this is not done, they will suffer a continued reduction in their economic benefits. This measure might be likened to giving a person suffering from a ten-year old hangover two or three aspirins. But even that is a step in the right direction.

• (2050)

Third, and in conclusion, I urge all members of the House—this is not confined to my party by any means—to continue to press the government and the minister to recognize the need for raising the basic pension and other benefits which should go to the veterans of Canada and without which they will continue to suffer a reduction in their standard of living far below that to which they are entitled.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, it is my duty to say a few words about the increase in veterans allowances. It is a pleasure for me to speak on Bill C-208.