

*Old Age and Veterans' Pensions*

other times, have wanted to be compassionate, or visionary, or open. This government wants to be efficient. And when it is obviously being inefficient, it wants to shut the windows on the federal government, cut off the critics and set up "manipulation Canada". Then, when the government is inefficient no one will know. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) has a word for that. He calls it being effective. But whether it is efficient or effective, this government has a style it is going to defend against all comers. It is prepared to be tough with the poor, tough with the old, tough with those 542,000 "regrettable side effects" who are out of work in Canada.

Clearly, there has been no adequate adjustment in the cost of living in connection with old age pensions. We know that the adjustment of approximately 2 per cent is limited to the basic pension of a little less than \$80. It does not even cover the whole pension, including the guaranteed annual income supplement. I am concerned particularly with the older people who are in need. The resolution speaks of the basic old age security pension, and I certainly hope the government will consider this. Whatever the government may say about the problems of raising the general level of old age security at this time, they should at least give serious consideration to effective revision of the guaranteed income supplement.

I do not want to spend too much time on figures, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has already given some. The poverty line indicated by the Economic Council of Canada before the Senate was \$1,800 for a single person and \$3,000 for a couple. If this is adjusted to 1970, these figures become \$1,950 for a single person and \$3,250 for a couple. I know that people do not like to think of themselves as being poor or to be called poor, but these are the figures produced by the Economic Council of Canada as minimal for a decent existence in this country. The guaranteed income supplement added to the existing pension gives a total for a single person of \$1,336.92, about \$600 below the poverty line. For a couple the total would be \$2,673.84, also about \$600 below what the Economic Council of Canada established as the poverty line.

As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre pointed out, about 51 per cent of those receiving the old age security pension are receiving the guaranteed income supplement, in whole or in part. This gives us some idea

of the percentage of old age security recipients who are well below the poverty line. I do not want to worry the House too much with figures, Mr. Speaker, but these can be amply documented. Surely, this is a serious situation. The government should consider immediately, without waiting for more white papers, moving to offset the rise that has taken place in the cost of living. It is wrong, as I have said, to ask our older citizens to bear the full cost of the fight against inflation. I say, let us all fight inflation but let the Prime Minister and his colleagues stop using the war against inflation as a club to beat the heads of the weak and old. Let us use anti-inflationary measures as they should be used, as a shield, and let us supplement that with justice to those who are being particularly hard hit by inflation.

● (4:00 p.m.)

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Stanfield:** The government has also, of course, taken the same sort of line against Canada's veterans, many of whom are also on fixed incomes which inflation is eating away and which the government stubbornly refuses to augment. I offer this warning: if the government thinks veterans groups are going to be easy to push around, it is in for a surprise.

This debate today concerns veterans' supplements and allowances. The considerations which should guide our debate are considerations of justice and equity, and of the mean conditions of life which many Canadian veterans are forced to endure today because of the policy of this government. I think it is also appropriate, in passing, to make the point that if any group of Canadians has a special claim on justice from their government, they are the men and women who risked their lives for this country and sometimes suffered disabilities that seriously limited their later private lives and earning power. There is no need for me to dwell on our duty not to be blind to our obligations. Certainly, we should show more gratitude than a stone-cold response to the veterans' request for a just and decent standard of living. In particular, disability pensions must be improved. In the beginning, the veterans' disability pensions were tied to the cost of unskilled labour. These pensions are a long way short of that rate now, and some adjustments must be made to take account of recent changes.

I suggest we should also consider raising the ceiling of income for those in receipt of