

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

which has helped a great deal toward informing producers about what they may expect in the next 12 months as far as dairy production is concerned. Similarly it may be said that a comprehensive policy statement would be welcome in respect of other sectors of the agricultural industry, relative particularly to livestock and grain growing.

For those reasons I would ask the minister, or whoever is answering for him at this time, whether or not it is the intention of the government to present a comprehensive White Paper on agricultural policy before the end of this year.

Mr. Bruce S. Beer (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for bringing this important matter to the attention of the house. I note from his question that he has quoted from a statement made by the Minister of Forestry (Mr. Sauvé) to the University of Manitoba. I can only assume that the Minister of Forestry was referring to a White Paper which he may contemplate producing, concerning the aspects of agriculture which come under his jurisdiction.

So far as the Department of Agriculture and the minister of that department are concerned, I am not aware of the presentation of a White Paper being imminent. The Department of Agriculture and the minister announce from time to time certain changes in agricultural policy. The hon. member has referred to a recent announcement in respect of a dairy policy and the important effect it had on farmers generally from coast to coast. I can only assure the hon. member that when important matters are to be introduced an announcement will be made by the minister in the prescribed way in this house.

I do not have any further information to give my hon. friend at this particular time which might enlighten him regarding the question he has asked.

OLD AGE SECURITY—REQUEST FOR INCREASE TO \$100 PER MONTH

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, last Friday morning I asked the Prime Minister the following question, which is to be found at page 4503 of *Hansard*:

What answer has the government given to a recent request from the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation for an across-the-board increase in the old age security pension to \$100 a month?

[Mr. Schreyer.]

The Chair felt that my question was not couched in the terms prescribed for questions to be asked on orders of the day, so I gave the appropriate notice that I would discuss it on an adjournment motion. I welcome the attendance at this time of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen), who I assume will be answering my question. I hope his answer will be one of his better ones.

As the minister knows, as a result of the communication being addressed to him, as well as to the Prime Minister—indeed, copies of it were sent to all members of parliament—the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation is concerned about reports to the effect that any increase in old age pensions may be based on some kind of a test—needs, means or otherwise. This organization feels very strongly, as do many people of this country, and I share their view, that what we need at this time is an across-the-board increase in old age security pensions without a means test, to a figure of not less than \$100 a month, payable now at age 65.

When the minister is answering I hope he will not put us off by a reference to the Canada assistance plan, or by telling us that the government is studying this sort of thing, which is often what we hear. This is a serious situation concerning many millions of Canadians, not just those on pensions but many others. Some of us feel that this parliament could go a long way toward redeeming itself in the eyes of this country by taking action on this important question.

Let me say to the minister, although I am sure he knows it, that there are many things about parliament which the people of Canada do not really understand. I believe indeed if they were here tonight they would find it difficult to understand the huge crowd that was on the floor and in the galleries when we were discussing a certain subject, but in this last half hour, when we are discussing the peace of the world, agricultural policy and old age pensions, perhaps it is a good thing that no one asks whether we have a quorum.

When people ask questions about parliament, may I suggest that there are two things that old age pensioners in particular cannot understand. First they cannot understand how it is that we find time in parliament to discuss some of the things which occupy our attention, some of the things which fill our newspapers and are broadcast on radio and on television but, despite the time which we can find for that kind of discussion, we