

Suggested Pension Payment Corrections

[English]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY****ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 58 (4) (a)—SUGGESTIONS
TO CORRECT ALLEGED ANOMALIES IN
PAYMENT OF PENSIONS**

The house resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).

Mr. Nystrom: Before the supper hour, Mr. Speaker, I was able to begin my remarks on the motion by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). At that time I said there were one or two underlying principles that should be mentioned and this is why I rise to participate in this debate. As a young person, I said I was not only concerned with problems relating to my own generation, minorities and depressed peoples in various parts of the world. I am concerned with the problems of the powerless and under privileged minorities, as well as with problems of groups in our own society in Canada and indeed around the world.

I sincerely believe it is a right for our senior citizens to have a decent standard of living. It is a social responsibility and obligation of members of parliament to ensure that the elderly people of our country have a decent standard of living. They should not suffer from the financial barriers apparent in today's society. The treatment of many pensioners in Canada is degrading and at times inhuman. This should not happen in our affluent society.

Before the dinner hour I began to quote statistics relating to problems brought to my attention by my constituents, in particular employees of the C.N.R. in Melville. I stated nearly 400 people receive pensions of below \$25 a month from the C.N.R. Just to reiterate, 2,250 receive a pension of \$25 a month and over 8,000 receive pensions of less than \$80 a month. I do not blame these people for being upset and not wanting to tolerate this injustice to former employees of the C.N.R. Why do members of this house who are responsible for the actions of the C.N.R. allow this situation to rest on their consciences? It is not only employees and ex-employees in the city of Melville who are unhappy about these pensions.

Every year the interest on the C.N.R. pension fund is greater than the total amount of

[Mr. Leblanc (Laurier).]

money paid by way of pensions. This is ludicrous. It is no wonder C.N.R. employees are asking for more pension benefits. They deserve them. I agree with the retired railroad workers. It is typical of the society we live in that there are many contradictions. We all know that the railway companies have been subsidized for many years by the government to the tune of many millions of dollars. At the same time, many people who have worked in building these railways must live on incomes at the subsistence or poverty level. We keep them poor.

There are many more contradictions in our society. United States automobile manufacturers, mining companies and huge corporations are subsidized by the government of Canada. Yet 20 per cent of our population live on incomes of \$3,000 a year, 40 per cent with \$4,000 a year or less. Is this the kind of justice we want in our society? Basically, Mr. Speaker, this can be summed up as socialism for the rich and dog eat dog free enterprise for the poor. This is the situation of many railway workers in this country.

While travelling to speak at a conference in the city of Brandon, I read in a newspaper an article concerning a man who made several millions of dollars last year, tax free, because of the many loopholes in our tax system relating to capital gains and foreign investment. His chauffeur, who is paid a salary of \$300 or \$400 a month, had to pay income tax. This is one of the many contradictions in our modern society. Members of parliament must do something to change this system. Something must be done to stop the subsidizing of corporations and to help the people who work for these companies. The attitude of some people can be summed up by quoting the remarks of a Liberal M.L.A. in the legislature of Saskatchewan. When talking recently about tough and damp grain, he stated "Farmers who have considerable quantities of damp wheat are stupid". This is the attitude of too many parliamentarians across Canada.

It is ironic that we can send men to the moon to explore outer space but we cannot give our elderly people \$125 or \$150 to live on each and every month. It seems very odd that we can send men around the moon but cannot even sell wheat. It seems odd that we can reach out in outer space and cannot reach out to the feelings of other people with human dignity and pride. This is the kind of society in which we live. I maintain we must change this type of society entirely and the older people of this country are victims of one facet