

*Suggested Pension Payment Corrections*

important to try to stop inflation, which after all hits hardest those who are on fixed incomes, than it is forever to be raising old age and other pensions. In reply to that I want to say that no government yet has stopped inflation, except in times of depression. Some governments have managed to check it a bit here and there, but the course of history is the story of prices and wages going up and up. We are always aware of the extent to which this hurts people, but it is also a fact of history that with rising prices and rising wages people who are at work fare a little better as time goes on. Things may cost a lot more today than they did when wages were 50 cents an hour but, even at today's higher prices, today's higher wages are such that working people are better off.

What is wrong with our society is that we draw a line, a line of discrimination that is hard and fast. We say to those who are at work: "You have the power to struggle for increases; you have the opportunity to get those increases and to improve your standard of living". But we say to those who are on the other side of that line, those who are retired: "Your income must remain fixed from the point of retirement until your days on earth are done". We regard this as a matter of rank discrimination and we say it is not good enough just for the government to declare that it is going to try to check inflation.

The other night I raised this question under another heading having to do with retired civil servants. The Acting Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lang) seemed completely to miss my concern that our retired people have the opportunity to share in the rising standard of living. He said that it would be better if we stopped inflation and one of the ways, said he, to stop inflation was to stop asking for pension increases. We regard that stand not only as sheer nonsense but as most unfair and discriminatory against our senior citizens.

The fact of inflation, the fact of rising prices, the fact of rising wages—these facts are all present. What we want is recognition of a further fact, namely, that our senior citizens have just as much right to share in the rising standard of living as those who are still at work. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we reject the argument that the only thing the government should do is to carry on a futile battle against inflation. It is not carrying it on anyway. We say that a government that encourages and does its part in raising the standard of living for working people by raising salaries and wages should do the same for

our senior citizens and raise their pensions. Not to do so is rank discrimination against those who are retired.

Another argument that will be probably used if the government makes the mistake of opposing this motion today will be that this matter is under review. As an answer, this is becoming a bit monotonous in this house. Everything that we are concerned about is under review. As far as pension matters are concerned, not only is it not fully satisfactory just to tell the house that these questions are under review, but I am also deeply disturbed about words that leak out here and there in connection with the nature of this review. We are told that maybe there has to be a change, a new approach. I have been asking for a new approach to the problem; the government has said that it will come out with a new approach. But it talks of selectivity. Those famous words of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) still ring in our ears—"We have had enough of this free stuff." The whole concept of universal social security programs seems to be under attack in the review that the government is making. We submit that as an answer to the question we are raising today this is not good enough.

I said that we are asking for a new approach to the problem of pensions for those who are retired, and I should like to indicate three matters that I think are at the heart, three things that are the essence, of this new approach.

First of all, I believe we have to establish once and for all that retirement pensions, pensions that enable people to live decently after they have done their share of this country's work, are a matter of right, that there must not be any kind of charity or means test or needs test or stigma of any kind attached to them. I thought that we had reached that point back in the early 1950's when we got rid of the means test from the old age security pension, but we got it back again with respect to the guaranteed income supplement. The words that are leaking out about the review that is now taking place suggest that something further along that line is in the government's mind.

Words like "selectivity", "responsible payments", and so on are fine words, but the fact of the matter is that if you put older people on any kind of needs or means test, even if you have a system of negative income tax—and I will come to that a little later—you are putting them in the position of receiving something that still has the social

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