

*Old Age and Veterans' Pensions*

have an argument from the other side in the course of this debate about inflation, that these people have to be enlisted as soldiers in the war against inflation. They have already had 9 per cent cut off their income for all practical purposes. They are suffering most of all from inflation. While the executive salaries are going up and with all the other things that are happening, let us not put the burden of fighting inflation on these people. These are people for whom we should be taking the action suggested in this motion.

The final thing I want to say—and I say it carefully without any attempt to be oratorical about it, but I say it plainly—this House has a particular obligation at this time, a strong moral obligation, to do something in the pension field. We have done something in this field for ourselves. I am not going to raise those arguments again. Members know where I stand on that. However, I submit, having done what we did for ourselves before Easter, we have as great a moral obligation to our old age pensioners and to our war veterans as we have ever had. I hope we will meet that obligation today with unanimous support for this motion which calls for consideration of an immediate and substantial increase in the basic amount of the old age pension, for an immediate and substantial increase in veterans pensions and allowances, as the first steps toward improving the quality of life of all our older and retired people.

• (3:50 p.m.)

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

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to support this motion that has been placed before the House. I point out that it asks only that the government give consideration to extending something like justice to the older people and the veterans of the country. I, therefore, hope that other Members of this Parliament on the government side might also be prepared to support this motion and thereby indicate that, in their personal view, the poor, the aged and the veterans deserve a higher priority than being always at the bottom of the heap in Canada.

There have been some encouraging news reports suggesting that a sliver of conscience has found its way into the cabinet, and that some of the ministers, and some of the other supporters on the government side, are unhappy about the government's policy of socking it to the poor and the weak in order that the prosperous and the strong might

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

thrive. Today, they have a chance to say the same thing in Parliament they have been saying in private.

It is a shocking comment that, in a country so proud of a high standard of living, Parliament must devote a day to give direction to the government to give consideration—simply give consideration—to stopping discrimination against the people who worked to build up that standard of living, and fought to protect it. The people the opposition parties seek to relieve today are often the people who have spent or risked their lives in the service of Canada, and want now no more than a decent standard of living in their retirement. Quite apart from the total absence of justice in the so-called just society, the refusal of this government to respond to the plight of these Canadians—the insistence of this government to maintain a cruel discrimination against the elderly and the veterans of Canada—is an act of callous and monumental ingratitude.

This motion must have caused great consternation in the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) office. They just will not know what the country is coming to. Last week it was the unemployed and now it is the pensioners and the veterans. In the East Block they must be asking, why is Parliament bothering to bring up these problems out of proper order? Doesn't Parliament know that problems must be dealt with in order and that now is the time to fight inflation, so until it is licked we cannot consider the problems of the aged or anybody else?

Don't we know, they say in the East Block, that inflation is hardest on old people and consequently nothing can be done to ease their problem? That argument, of course, is absurd. Fight inflation, certainly! But it is wrong to suggest that those who want to provide some relief for the aged or the veterans want to cease and desist in the fight against inflation. It is one of the prime minister's stark and false alternatives that he is fond of putting forth. Certainly, let us continue to fight inflation but let's not allow those who suffer most to bear the principal cost of continuing the fight. If Parliament keeps up these demands to help people, the Prime Minister's flow charts will be thrown out of whack. And it is well known that in this government, flow charts are far more important than people. You don't hear anyone on that side calling a computer a "regrettable side effect".

I want to dwell on that aspect for a moment. It is the claim of this government that they are efficient. Other governments, in