

The Address—Mr. Drew

matters. The exceedingly limited results obtained from the enormous sums already spent surely leave no further doubt that a committee should be empowered to inquire into defence expenditures so that the elected representatives of the people—and they are the ones to have the responsibility—may have reliable information as to the results we are getting from the huge expenditures that are being made.

One thing about which the speech from the throne is strangely silent is the subject of veterans' pensions. When I raised this subject on June 30, the day on which we knew that we were going to adjourn until October, this exchange took place, as reported at page 4985 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Drew: . . . I would ask the minister to dispose of this matter by giving us an undertaking that when we meet in October he will take the proper steps to introduce legislation that will provide for a uniform over-all percentage increase to the veterans consistent with the increased cost of living.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe), after saying that he could not bind the government by his statement, then said:

I did state that the recommendations of the committee, which included the subject matter mentioned by the leader of the opposition, had been put before the government and will be considered by the government.

In view of that assurance that they were to be considered by the government, then if the government has any intention of dealing with this subject we certainly had every reason to expect that the speech from the throne would include an indication of what the government intends to do. I hope the absence of any reference to this subject does not close the door to further consideration of a matter that must be one of major concern to every member of this house.

At a time when the government, at long last, is finally agreeing to remove the means test in the case of old age pensioners of 70 or over, the distasteful and unfair means test has been applied to veterans before those in needy circumstances can receive some adjustment for the loss of buying power through inflation. An adequate basic pension is a matter of right, not of charity. Pensions are not paid to every veteran on the same basis. Pensions are paid on a basis that is in accord with the degree of their injury or disability. That being so, if there is any part of the Canadian population which is entitled to an adjustment to meet a loss in dollar value through inflation it is those pensioners who, by their unselfish service to the country, resulting in their disability, are so much in need of a basic pension adjusted adequately to living costs today.

The present situation must bring a feeling of humiliation to every member of this house who is prepared to countenance such an intolerable attitude toward those who have the highest claim upon our consideration. The treatment of our veterans and the refusal to make an over-all adjustment of pensions in their case related to the cost of living is in striking contrast to what the government has done in other cases and what is obviously the only real purpose of a second session of this house. I hope that the absence of any reference to this in the speech from the throne does not indicate that the government is unwilling to correct this situation.

I do not propose to discuss in detail those subjects referred to in the speech from the throne which can obviously be more satisfactorily discussed when the government measures dealing with them are before us. As I said before, nothing new has been raised in the speech from the throne. In fact, very little information has been given in regard to the subjects which we all knew we would be dealing with.

There is one subject, however, which although rather casually dealt with in the speech from the throne is by far the most urgent and important subject, along with national defence, which the members of this house will be called upon to discuss. It goes hand in hand with national defence, involves our real capacity to maintain our defence program, and is, in fact, part and parcel of the problem of defence itself. It is referred to in these words in the speech from the throne:

The concern of our people over the rising cost of living resulting from international and domestic inflationary pressure is fully shared by the government. Every measure will be taken which my ministers believe will be effective in counteracting inflation without impairing our free institutions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Drew: I am encouraged to hope that the hon. members who say "hear, hear" will be prepared for that very reason to support the amendment which I will introduce at the end of these remarks.

The anti-inflationary measures already in force have checked the upward trend of prices of goods and services affected by their operation.

I might say I am of course still quoting from the speech from the throne, because otherwise I am sure that many hon. members would wonder where that statement had come from.

The fact that the concern of the Canadian people about inflation is fully shared by the government will I hope bring some measure of reassurance to many Canadians who had been given the contrary impression by recent