

*Old Age and Veterans' Pensions*

pensions and now this white paper must wait for another white paper on social security measures. No doubt a further white paper will be published, following that, telling people how to spend the money.

The hon. member for York North (Mr. Danson) regretted that the motion is worded in such a manner that he cannot vote for it. I tried to note as accurately as I could some of the words he used. He said priority should be given to the needs of our senior citizens, but he cannot vote for the motion. He said we were giving the pensioners their own money, but he could not support the motion. Again, we heard more of those patronizing remarks, those platitudes about pensioners, those phrases in favour of motherhood and against sin. I hope that when the minister speaks he will take the hon. member for York North, the hon. member for Fort William and others on the government side off the hook by announcing that the government accepts this motion; or he should tell the House or make clear to his hon. friends behind the curtains that as far as the government is concerned, any hon. member can vote as he wishes—in other words a free vote. Or a third alternative is that hon. members, including government supporters, should vote as they wish.

**An hon. Member:** But it is supposed to be a non-confidence vote.

**Mr. Benjamin:** In any of these circumstances, if the motion passes, the mover of the motion and the NDP group generally would not consider it to have the effect of a vote of no-confidence.

**An hon. Member:** Then why did he move it?

**Mr. Benjamin:** We consider the interests of the old age pensioners as having greater priority than any partisan, political interest there might be in trying to win a non-confidence motion and forcing all the members on the government side to vote against it.

The motion is deliberately worded so as to be identical, almost, with the wording of a private member's motion. I am no expert on the rules or on the Standing Orders, and I realize this is no time to brag about it. But this was the only way in which my hon. friend could get a motion on the Order Paper upon which a vote would be taken. Had he put the motion forward under the other Standing Order, no vote would have been taken and I suspect the platitudes from hon. members on the other side would have

increased in number and volume. The motion was deliberately worded so as not to express non-confidence. It was deliberately designed by my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre so as not to condemn, and there is no member of this House who can carry water for him when it comes to understanding the rules and procedures of this chamber.

**An hon. Member:** Who would want to?

**Mr. Benjamin:** The motion can be voted for by any hon. member with or without the approval of his party. It cannot be considered a motion of non-confidence. I ask hon. members to consider the number of times they have called on constituents who live in housing fit only for cattle, who have to meet drug bills which eat up a great deal of the old age pension money which should be spent on food, clothing and shelter. These people do not receive sufficient income to enable them to move into senior-citizen housing. Homes operated by voluntary institutions have waiting lists as long as your arm, and as for those privately owned, only the relatively well-to-do can afford to move into them.

• (5:40 p.m.)

This is not a motion of non-confidence. All the motion asks is that the government consider. Whether or not the government does so is for the government to decide; there is nothing in the motion requiring the government to consider. Should this House pass the motion, there is passed on to the government, for the government's information, the views of the members of this House of Commons. Thereafter the responsibility is the government's, to take whatever action they so choose, whenever they wish to do so. That, purely and simply, is the entire intent of this motion; it asks the government to give consideration to taking action now while we are waiting for the white paper on social security.

Every member of this House knows that it will be some time before the white paper is published, and I hope the minister will indicate today when that will be. Then some time will be required to study the white paper and to hear briefs. No doubt a standing committee will spend weeks, perhaps months, studying the subject. At the earliest, legislation will not be introduced until one year from now.

Surely action retroactive to January 1 last can be taken now in order to provide an increase in the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement to tide our pensioners over. Their need is urgent. I agree