

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

and strongly as I can, I plead with the President of the Treasury Board to do everything he possibly can to get action on the matter soon.

The subject was under discussion in the late show period last night. My hon. friend from Carleton expressed indignation, indignation which I share. The parliamentary secretary to the present minister took exception to that approach. I hope I may get somewhere if I take a different approach.

I plead with the minister to realize how deeply disappointed, almost disillusioned, are the people who are concerned about this matter. The minister knows that he himself in June, 1966, a year and a quarter ago, gave his personal consent to this subject being referred to a special joint committee on the public service of Canada. That indication on his part was a word of encouragement which seemed to say that after all the years we have been fighting over this matter we were about to get somewhere. In January, 1967, the consent the minister had given was transformed into reality when the appropriate motion was made referring this question to the special joint committee on the public service. That joint committee did a tremendous job on this issue and it made a unanimous report on May 8 of this year recommending that immediate action be taken to increase the pensions of retired civil servants. I emphasize, again, that this was a unanimous report and that it was made by a committee of both houses with all parties in both houses represented thereon.

An immediate assurance was given that the matter would be considered and action taken at the earliest possible moment. I emphasize that this could have been acted upon before we adjourned for the summer on July 7. For a time it looked as though it might have been, because of the words of assurance which were given. But when July 7 came we were told we would have to wait until the fall. Not only were we told we would have to wait until the fall, but we were told by the President of the Treasury Board that an announcement of a specific proposal would be made in the fall. I plead with the minister not to get up and tell me tonight that it is still the fall. By the calendar it is—

Mr. Benson: It is only four days old.

Mr. Knowles: But the retired civil servants and their families believed that a recess of 11 weeks would certainly be long enough for the government to act, and that the necessary legislation would be ready when we resumed

yesterday. An assurance that something would be done was given not only by the present minister but by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) who entered the debate on the last day before we recessed, July 7. I was castigated for insisting that action be taken before we rose. I replied to that criticism by saying this, as reported in *Hansard* for Friday, July 7 at page 2360:

I know, if we are asked to wait until fall on this issue, that there will be other matters that will have priority. We would not reach the matter until October or November, and these people would not get their increase until next December or January. I know further, Mr. Speaker, that unless action is taken now we have no guarantee that action will be taken in the fall.

I was told that I lacked faith, that I lacked confidence, that I did not appreciate the deep concern on that side of the house over the plight of these people. I was told this on the floor of the house and out in the hall. They said: "Stanley, we are just as concerned as you are." But you, sir, as a member for an Ottawa constituency, know as I do what this means to many thousands of these people.

• (10:20 p.m.)

I could use the language that was used last night, and on occasion I probably will use it. I think it is a hoax that for months these people have been led to believe something was going to take place. But, Mr. Speaker, I put it to the President of the Treasury Board in terms of the strongest plea I can make—don't mislead these people, don't disappoint them, don't disillusion them any longer.

Parliament has spoken through a joint committee of both houses. It has said something should be done and should be done soon. The government has said through the mouth of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, through the mouth of the President of the Treasury Board, and through the mouth of the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) that active consideration is going to be given to that report and that something is going to be done.

We were told something was going to be done this fall, but yesterday the answer we got was that the matter was still under consideration and that when a decision is reached the house will be informed. That is the kind of answer we have been getting ever since May 8. I am afraid if that kind of answer continues to be given, my prediction of last July 7 will prove to be correct, that by not having got the matter dealt with then the battle is almost lost. So far as I am concerned