

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

from 1965 when it was decided by law that there was to be this increase due to the cost of living. What has happened?

In 1963 the consumer price index on the old basis of 1949 equalling 100 stood at 133.0. In 1965 it stood at 138.7, and now in 1969 it stands at 161.4. That is the consumer price index on the old 1949 basis, not on the new basis which has been established recently, but in order to make comparisons I have to use like quantities.

This means that since 1963 when the pension was fixed at \$75 the cost of living has gone up by 28.4 percentage points, or by 21 per cent over the cost of living in 1963. By the same manner of arithmetic the cost of living has gone up since 1965 by 22.7 percentage points, or 16 per cent over the cost of living as it stood in 1965. Members can take a choice. If they work from 1965, the year the law was passed to provide an increase, that increase is now of the order of 16 per cent. If they work from 1963 when the pension was set at \$75, the increase is now in the order of 21 per cent.

In other words, the \$75 pension should now be \$87 per month, if you work it from the year 1965, or \$90.75 a month if you work it from 1963. Yet, as hon. members know, all that has happened is that two 2 per cent increases have been added, a total of only 4 per cent, so that the pension now stands at \$78. For the purposes of the argument I will settle for the lower figure. It should be at \$87 right now to keep faith with the decision of this parliament in 1965, that we were going to raise the pension in accordance with the rise in the cost of living. In any event it is only \$78. This is just the same as though we were taking \$9 out of the pockets of every person in Canada who is drawing an old age security pension.

It is not good enough to go on telling us week after week, month after month, that all these matters are under review. This involves a principle and an obligation. As a matter of justice we ought to insist that the time has come to amend the Old Age Security Act and increase that ceiling in order that the increase in pension will reflect not just 2 per cent but whatever the actual increase in the cost of living happens to be.

A friend has reminded me, and he does not need to because this has been my song all along, that we have to go further than this. We have to give our elderly people a share of the increase in productivity. Surely, the least

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

we can do is give them the full measure of the increase in the cost of living.

I see you are moving to the edge of your chair, Mr. Speaker, so in conclusion let me say what bothers me most about the answer given to me by the minister on May 29. That is the ease with which he just said "No". That is the answer we get all the time from this government.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): He has had a lot of practice.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The answer is "No" to these old age pensioners, to war veterans, to retired civil servants, to railway pensioners—to anyone in this pension field.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Nyet.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Nyet, that is the language they speak over there. This is one of the most serious questions facing this country. We must make sure that our retired people have a share of the increased productivity of this society. It is not good enough to go on answering "No". The time for action has come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Loiselle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we often say in French that you know a good cook by her recipes. Well, I dare say that you know the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre by his questions which are always in the same area.

I agree with the hon. member who says that the old age pension, the guaranteed income, in short, all the different kinds of pensions are not high enough. On the other hand, I may comfort him by quoting some statistics to show him what the Canadian government spends on these different kinds of pensions.

Were I to tell the hon. member that the government is in the process of revising all the social welfare legislation, he would reply: This is nothing new, the minister has said that before. He was shocked when the minister said no last May 29. And if the minister had said something else, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would have objected in some other way.

Tonight, he chooses to object in this way because the minister has simply told him no. If the minister had answered: We are in the process of considering the legislation as a