

*Old Age and Veterans' Pensions*

My views about all of these have not changed one iota, but rather than suggest that the House bog down in the details of these things, in view of the fact that a study is in progress and that something more has to be done later, I simply suggest that we take what we now have and act on it in an interim way because the situation is an emergency.

I say that the basic amount of the old age security pension should be increased immediately and substantially. What I mean by the word "substantial" will be pretty clear if one looks at the Order Paper. There is a notice of motion in my name that calls for the pension to be raised to \$150 a month across the board. In that motion I suggest that we wipe out the guaranteed income supplement, wipe out the means test, and go for \$150 across the board. I think that is a better solution than one based on selectivity. But when I ask in today's motion for a substantial increase in the basic amount of the old age security pension, I leave it to the government to decide on the amount. For example, if the government decided to grant an increase from \$75 to \$100 to meet this request, then may I remind the government that the guaranteed income supplement is defined as 40 per cent of the basic pension. Therefore, an increase in the basic pension from \$75 to \$100 would increase the guaranteed income supplement up to \$40 and produce a grand total of \$140 a month.

I offer that as something less than the \$150 that I am asking for across the board but I offer it as a compromise because, as I was saying, we have an emergency situation that calls for immediate action, whatever is going to happen with respect to the white paper on social security that is to be presented later. That is the kind of thing I think should be done. I apply the same reasoning to the pensions under the Pension Act and to the allowances under the War Veterans Allowance Act. I think there are some basic changes that should be made there in the way those pensions and allowances are structured. But at the moment we could help meet the immediate emergency by a straight percentage increase in the pension under the Pension Act and by increasing the amount of the war veterans allowance and by raising the ceiling under which those allowances are paid.

There are many other groups. As I said, some were covered, like the retired civil servants, but there are other groups such as the blind, the disabled and the handicapped, who all too often are forgotten. If I brought those in, I would be told there is the Canada Assist-

ance Plan and there are the provinces. I do bring them into these remarks because I do not want us to forget them. But I am also trying to avoid confusion, to avoid our running off into a lot of different alleyways and missing the main point. I am asking the House to concentrate on these two main groups—old age pensioners generally, of whom there are a million and a half, and veterans who are recipients under the Pension Act and the War Veterans Allowance Act of whom there are about 200,000.

I have already said that this motion, although there were some questions about it as to whether or not it was a non-confidence motion, is deliberately drawn to go either way. If the government says no, even if it says this under the pretext that it is a non-confidence motion, and says it is going to vote against it, then of course we have no option but to force the vote and to let those in the House who believe that pensions should be increased stand up and be counted and those who are not prepared to do that also stand up and be counted. But it is quite in keeping with precedents of the past, quite within the way in which this motion has been worded, for the first speaker for the government to say that the government accepts the intent and the spirit of this motion, that the government believes it should give consideration to an immediate increase in the pensions under the Old Age Security Act and in the pensions and allowances paid to our veterans. If the government does take that position, the motion will not have to be put to a recorded vote at 9.45 p.m. but it will be a unanimous vote and the government will not fall. We do not want the government to fall, not today. There is no point in that at this stage. There is too much to be done around this place to have an election right away. But, to put it in plain language, we do want to put the government on the spot on this issue and we ask the government to face this situation by doing what it ought to do, by saying that it does agree to this proposition. That being the case, there will be a unanimous vote at 9.45 p.m. and all will be well. All we have to do then is to wait for the government to give that consideration and bring in legislation before the end of this session. Failing that, there will have to be a vote and the country will make up its own mind as to the extent to which the government is really interested in our older people.

I have just two more things to say and since only two minutes of my time remain, I shall have to say them fast. First, let us not