

Old Age and Veterans' Pensions

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Dinsdale: Mr. Speaker, I thank hon. members for their consideration. I will try to bring my remarks to a conclusion as quickly as possible. The point I want to make is that the veterans charter is a unique method that the country has adopted of rewarding the men and women of Canada who served this country in time of war. The government's shilly-shallying and procrastination, and the minister's statement that there will be no increase in veterans benefits until the over-all welfare review has been completed by the government and that these benefits are part of the social policy, giving rise to the suspicion that the government is attempting to remove the fundamental rights of the veterans of Canada.

I trust, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, or whoever speaks for the government, tonight will end once and for all this element of uncertainty that has been introduced and will state in specific terms that the discrimination against the veterans of this country will be removed immediately as the resolution suggests. I hope a spokesman for the government will state unequivocally that the Veterans' Charter, the fundamental bill of rights of the veterans of Canada, will not be violated.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I support the general intent of this motion but I will not vote for it, for two reasons. The first is that despite its non-critical wording, it is in fact a no confidence motion. In answer to a point of order raised this afternoon by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald), Your Honour ruled that in his opinion this would be a no confidence motion in view of the fact that it was made under Standing Order 58(9).

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) maintains that it is not a non-confidence motion, but I feel we must respect the opinion of Mr. Speaker and not the hon. member who introduced the motion. If the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre had really wanted the members of this House to unanimously vote in favour of his motion, he would not have presented it under Standing Order 58(9) which explicitly uses the wording "no confidence motion". It states:

In each of the periods described in section (5) of this order, not more than two opposition motions shall be no confidence motions against the government.

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard).]

The Standing Order then provides for these no confidence motions. If the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre was sincere in the statement that he would like to have unanimous support for his motion, it is hard to understand why he presented it under this Standing Order. Members on the government side are faced with a dilemma. To many members of this House the wording of the motion is acceptable. It is therefore unfortunate that it has been moved under this Standing Order. Many members would like to vote for the motion, but they are faced with the dilemma of not only voting for a motion which asks that the government give consideration to certain proposals, but also of supporting a no confidence motion.

I have another reason for not supporting this motion, although I accept the general intent and sentiment behind it. It is a much more important reason. In the motion, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre states that we should give consideration to an immediate and substantial increase in the basic amount of the old age pension. I disagree with him. I do not believe we should increase the basic amount of the old age pension. Any increase should be directed to the guaranteed income supplement. This matter was debated at great length when the guaranteed income supplement was introduced three years ago. At that time there was a difference of opinion between the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and myself as well as many members on the government side. My position is that we should direct the limited resources of this country so that those who really need assistance will receive as high a pension as possible. I cannot see any reason for giving flat, across-the-board pensions to those who are still earning salaries. Some members of this House are old enough to receive this pension. I cannot see giving across-the-board pensions to them and to people who are receiving large pensions from their companies, rental income or income from interest and dividends.

Since we have to raise the money we pay to pensioners through taxation, we should direct these moneys to those who really need assistance and who are old. I would change the wording of this motion to read, "give consideration to an immediate and substantial increase in the guaranteed income supplement".

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre suggested a pension of \$150 a month. I would support that, but not as a basic, flat