

Interim Supply

The minister made the statement that the government's intentions regarding other types of pension are referred to in the speech from the throne. Of course, that is part of the answer that the previous government gave. One of the answers given by the government to the Minister of Public Works when he was only the member for Vancouver-Quadra was that since we first started asking for improvements in the position of retired civil servants the universal old age pension had been brought into being and had in fact improved the position of these people. That did not satisfy the Minister of Public Works when he sat on this side of the chamber as member for Vancouver-Quadra. I cannot imagine he is satisfied yet. I believe the kind of representation he was making to the government last year he is still making to the Minister of Finance now that he is in a position where he has a greater influence than he had before.

Here too I do not think the Minister of Finance should impose any closure on himself. I think he should tell us whether the statement he made the other day, in reply to a request from this side that action be taken is just a stock answer or whether we can actually look to the new government to fulfil the implied promise that the lot of these people would be improved. This promise I think was implicit in the stand they took when they were in opposition to the government.

I have not the record before me but figures have been mentioned many times as to the large number of people who are drawing very low pensions despite their faithful service to the federal government. We think now, as the Conservatives thought before, that the government should be a model employer. I hope the Minister of Finance will take this opportunity to speak more fully and more hopefully on this question than he has yet done.

Mr. McCullough: Mr. Chairman, I believe that already in this session we have found that the Minister of Finance is being quite coy with parliament in regard to exactly what the policy of the government is going to be. Coming back to a new session of parliament members are, of course, usually loaded with a lot of problems from their constituencies and indeed most of us are quite anxious to place on record some of these problems. It is not my intention this evening to try to exhaust all the problems confronting my constituents and the people I represent, or indeed the people of Canada, nor to even deal in their entirety with the

various matters I intend to bring out. However, I think when the government is coming to parliament and asking for more money with which to carry on its functions there are some things which should be drawn to its attention early in the session.

My constituency of course is mainly agricultural and the problems confronting that industry are foremost in my mind. This afternoon some of my colleagues brought to the attention of the committee certain conditions facing agriculture. Indeed one of the main problems and arguments during election time was just what each party was going to do for that key industry in Canada. I do not want to deal with all these problems now, but I would like to point out to the Minister of Agriculture and to the government that there is a trend in agriculture today that is certainly very alarming. It is not only the poor farmer who is leaving the farm but that some of our finest people are doing likewise. This is not the natural course of events which one might assume would follow increased mechanization of the farms but it is purely and simply the question of the cost-price squeeze in which the farmers are caught. Some of our best returned men, who perhaps have now had 10 years on the farm, are leaving farming completely, finding it impossible to continue.

It is very disturbing to me when I ride through my constituency to find, not one but literally dozens of these young men leaving their farms and giving up in desperation on account of this cost-price squeeze. I hope that this government, in its deliberations and in the legislation it brings before parliament this year, will deal adequately with this problem and not just give us stock answers or partially meet the problem.

One of the things I want to indicate to this government as something I think should be considered because of its inherent dangers is the large amount of financing which we know is required to start a young man in agriculture in western Canada. I suggest that it should be made possible for a young man to go on the farm without equity or other financial backing, but with the help of some kind of government loan at low interest rates so that he can profitably mechanize his farm and operate it efficiently.

Another thing which I would like to mention early in this session is something which we and the government members when they were formerly on this side of the chamber often brought to the attention of the then government. This is the question of veterans' pensions and the eligibility of a war veteran for such pensions. I had occasion to work very hard on one case for some two or