

Adjournment Debate

They will find out that it is nonsense to suggest such a system.

May I call it ten o'clock, Madam Speaker?

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS—SUGGESTION COMPANY INDEX PENSIONS WITHOUT WAITING FOR HALL REPORT

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, on checking the record I discovered that on five different occasions during the month of May 1 raised the question of railway pensions, particularly the pensions of retired employees of Canadian National Railways.

On May 7, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 5552, I asked the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) if he would make representations to the Canadian National Railways to come through with an escalation of pensions in the year 1975 without delay, and without waiting for the Hall report.

A few days later, on May 12, we were discussing the estimates of the Department of Transport. I raised the matter again and the minister informed me that on May 26 there would be a board meeting in Montreal that might make a decision on this matter. I promised I would put a question to him on May 27. I did so on that date, whereupon the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport (Mr. McIsaac) replied, as reported at pages 6148-9 of *Hansard*, to the effect that a certain decision had been taken the day before, Monday, May 26.

When I looked at the details of that information I found I was quite disturbed, so on May 28 I tried to make a motion under Standing Order 43 but did not get unanimous consent. Then I tried under Standing Order 26 but I could not get the Speaker's approval. Next day, May 29, I was able to get the Minister of Transport to have the information that the Canadian National had given made an appendix to *Hansard*. That information is to the effect that in the year 1975 there is to be an escalation of the pensions of certain former employees of the CNR. However, the scale is a sliding one, the amounts are quite meagre, and there is to be no increase at all for those who retired in 1973 and 1974.

● (2200)

In previous years escalations were designed to cover those who had retired right down to the end of the immediately preceding December; now we have a case of escalation being denied to those who retired in the last two years.

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

Apart from the fact that I regret the small amount of increase which is to go to those who retired before 1973, and that widows get only 50 per cent, I find it ominous that the Canadian National is now bringing forth an escalation plan which ignores those who retired in the last two years. I say it is ominous because it looks to me as if the CNR wants to revert to pensions which are fixed and do not escalate annually. We have said for a long time that all pensions should escalate annually.

I know that the Hall report, when it comes, will deal with all aspects of railway pensions, with all railways, with the pensions of those in service as well as the pensions of those now retired. I hope that that report will recommend an escalation of pensions of railway workers at least equal to the rise in the cost of living. Madam Speaker, Dr. Noel Hall is still holding hearings; it is hard to say when the report will be made. It could be months away, instead of weeks, if I may refer to the promises which have been made.

I contend that the request made on May 7 still stands and that Canadian National Railways should be asked to provide in the present year, 1975, escalation in the pensions of those who retired up to the end of last year. That escalation, like the escalation for retired public servants and for retired members of Parliament, and like the total escalation provided under Old Age Security and certain other pensions, should be at least equal to the rise in the cost of living which, even in Statistics Canada terms, is 10 per cent or more.

The other day when discussing this matter with the parliamentary secretary, I asked if what Canadian National had announced was the last word or whether we could count on a further decision. I dare to believe that when the Hall report comes down we shall see another decision; but that could be a long way off. So I am asking on behalf of pensioners who are still alive that the CNR treat them fairly. That fair treatment calls for an escalation for the year 1975 to all who retired in 1974 or earlier at least equal to the rise in the cost of living. The figure applied should be no lower than the figure applied in other cases; the increase ought to be not less than 10 per cent, without any further delay. I hope the parliamentary secretary has a good word for us tonight.

Mr. Cliff McIsaac (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the question raised by the hon. member, and raised on other occasions by the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay) and the hon. member for London East (Mr. Turner), is most appropriate. When the question was raised on May 7 the minister himself said it was an appropriate question and he promised at that time to discuss it with the CN authorities. As a result he met with CN authorities on May 26 to discuss this question of some increase, some adjustment in the pensions of those who retired some time ago.

Immediately following this meeting an escalation of CN pensions, effective January 1, 1975, was announced. Notice of these increases was appended to *Hansard* of May 29, at the hon. member's request, as he pointed out. The escalation included scaled increases in benefits, depending on the year of retirement, in pension cheques for employees who retired in 1972 or before. The announce-