

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

I repeat my question, Mr. Speaker, and I do so in the light of the budget speech of Tuesday night, in which the Minister of Finance confirmed what had been set out in the budget papers, namely that the cost of living can be expected to rise during 1966.

When one realizes that pensioners are not now able to get by on the \$75, for example, that they now have under old age security, what are they to do when the cost of living goes up still further? I hope that any answer that is made on behalf of the government tonight will face up to the seriousness of the question. It is not going to be good enough to say that the budget which was brought down on Tuesday night is somehow going to prevent the cost of living from going higher than it would otherwise have gone. The fact is that that same budget was presented by a minister who said that the cost of living would be going up.

I submit that the difficulty facing our older people in this situation is a very serious one. On every hand we are told that this is an affluent age, that we are living in a period of great prosperity. The Minister of Finance told us this the other night; we hear it from commentators on radio and television; we read it in the press. The number of cars is increasing and the price of everything is going up. We are told that many wages and salaries are going up.

That is all very fine for the few in our society who may be experiencing this, Mr. Speaker, but it is not much comfort to those who are not experiencing it. I suggest that it is downright suffering for those whose incomes are fixed, particularly fixed at a low level and for whom there is no chance to make ends meet, let alone to cope with the rising cost of living.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that the only possible answer the government can make to the question which I put the other day is to come through with an increase in the old age security pension.

**Mr. Bell (Carleton):** May I ask the hon. gentleman whether he does not agree that this applies particularly to the civil service pensioners, the group in whom he and I have had more interest than any other?

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Speaker, seven minutes is hardly time to answer questions along the way, but that was a rhetorical question and the hon. member knows that my answer, like his, is "Yes".

[Mr. Knowles.]

However, may I point out that in the budget papers which the Minister of Finance tabled we are told that at the end of the current fiscal year there is in the old age security fund a surplus of \$215 million. That in itself is sufficient money to increase the old age security pension for 12 months to the extent of about \$18 a month for all those on the roll. Therefore I would suggest that this continuing suggestion of the government that it cannot now increase our old age security pension is not good enough and is no answer to the problem our elderly people face in trying to keep alive.

I have in my hand an interesting report entitled "Minimum Financial Needs Investigation". It was published by the Age and Opportunity Bureau at Winnipeg in January of this year. It includes a well worked out budget for older people, and without going into the detail of this well documented budget I may say that the suggestion made at Winnipeg is that the minimum on which an old person can get along is \$111.75 per month.

I also have a clipping from the *Toronto Globe and Mail* for Friday, January 28, 1966, which is a report of the Canadian conference on aging which met in Toronto at that time. Two or three figures are quoted—one of \$118 per month, one of \$126 per month and another well worked out figure of \$138.96 per month—as minimum amounts an elderly person needs just to get along.

● (10:40 p.m.)

If these are the amounts of money that many social workers feel is required for existence on the part of our older people, and when one realizes that many of them have only the \$75 old age security pension or other combinations which still amount to less than this, I submit that the increase in the cost of living which the Minister of Finance has predicted poses a problem which we simply cannot leave to the older people themselves. The old people were the forgotten group in the budget that was presented the other night. They have been forgotten by this government since the time of the last election. I think it is time we had a clearcut answer as to what they are to do.

I repeat the question I put to the Prime Minister on Monday, Mr. Speaker. In view of the statement in the budget papers that the cost of living will continue to go up this year, what are pensioners to do?