

*Old Age and Veterans' Pensions*

ernment's review of social security policy as a whole. In other words, there can be no increase in the basic pension rate under the Pension Act and no increase in the war veterans allowance until we have the white paper on social security, and for all we know we may not get it then.

I submit that it is most unfair to these people to tell them they will have to wait, and wait and wait. We understand there are to be a few adjustments. The Hong Kong veterans might get into the picture according to the Woods report, as confirmed in the white paper, and there are a number of things to be done in respect of the administration of the Pension Act which are good but overdue. But the basic thing, the need for more money on which to live, is not to be discussed so far as our veterans are concerned until the white paper on social security has been presented.

So, I ask when will this happen? So far as the study is concerned that the government no doubt will tell us is being given to the position of the old age pensions, we know about that. There was the Willard report which at one time we thought we would see soon but which apparently we are not to see at all. Now it is to be the white paper based on that report. This was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne last October. We thought we were going to get it soon, but now apparently we will not have it until just before the end of the session and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) has made clear that it is not expected any action on the basis of that report will be taken at this session.

Therefore, the picture emerges as a very clear one that these two main global groups of people about whom I am speaking, those on the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement as well as veterans drawing pensions or allowances under these two pieces of legislation I am talking about, will not receive any attention this session. So, what will happen next session? Will we have the same situation again and no doubt we will have to wait until the session after that, the one just before the election? If that is the case, this discrepancy between the 15.7 per cent increase in the cost of living and the 6.1 per cent increase in the pensions, as in the case of the old security recipients, will become even worse. What I described today as an emergency situation will become one of tragedy so far as Canada's older citizens are concerned.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

As is said in our motion, we think there are other things in life than money. We would like to see things done to improve the quality of life of our older and retired people. If there were more time, I could list a whole range of things that could be done in connection with other services such as health, housing, recreation and all kinds of things that could be done not only by governments but by people generally. But it is rather futile to preach to people about improving the quality of their lives if they do not have enough dollars to hold body and soul together.

• (3:40 p.m.)

I submit that the kind of situation that has developed is one in which we have done something for lots of other groups of pensioners, one in which many people have won increases in their wages and salaries, but for this group of a million and a half old age pensioners and 200,000 war veterans, all we have done has been to tell them to wait, and in particular to wait until after we get the white paper on social security. To put it in its simplest language, it is not fair, it is not just, and I think there should be action on this matter in this session.

I have no doubt that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) and perhaps someone speaking on behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé) who, I understand, is in Europe at the present time, will tell us that we should wait not only because these things have to be studied but because there might be some better way to deal with these matters than we have employed thus far. I confess to some fear about these suggestions because I hear so much talk about selectivity as a way of handling these things, and I am still an ardent advocate of the principle of universality. I do not like keeping the poor that way, as Ian Adams says in his current book. I think that the way to go is in the direction of the guaranteed annual income. I think the way to go is in the direction of raising the living standards of all our people, and therefore what we propose in this motion is not inconsistent with what might be sometime later a proper and adequate solution to the whole problem of security for our older people.

For example, I have not raised in this motion questions of detail such as the 2 per cent ceiling on the amount by which the pension can go up each year. I have not raised the questions of the means test or the income test or the guaranteed income supplement.