

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I say that it would boost morale and lessen some of the anxiety and suffering of our senior citizens in these difficult times if that notice were filed this afternoon.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** It should be done at five o'clock at the latest, because that is the deadline under the rules for such notices to be given on a Friday. If that notice were filed this afternoon the bill would be on the notice paper, and on the order paper right away. It would be printed tomorrow and the people of Canada would know that this promise is being translated into reality. I plead with the Minister of National Health and Welfare not to play the budgetary game and hold it off, but to bring it on right away.

• (1420)

The life of this parliament is not secure. The life of this parliament is in balance. One of the things that will determine whether this parliament will go on, certainly under its present structure, is whether the government acts on this important question. I call for that kind of action this afternoon. I said earlier that I am impressed with the attention the minister is giving to the responsibilities that are his. I suspect that if he were on his own and did not have to get the consent of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), his colleagues and so on, he would have done some of these things long ago.

The same urgency that I have applied to the question of old age security applies to a number of other things that come under his responsibility. During today's question period, I asked him about the range of escalation of the annual increases with respect to Canada Pension Plan benefits. In his reply, the minister indicated that the government was sympathetic to the idea of raising the present ceiling of 2 per cent to a higher figure but, as he put it, the federal government does not yet have sufficient concurrence from the various provinces. If that means there has to be a federal-provincial conference going into the whole area of social security, for heaven's sake, speed up the holding of that conference and, for heaven's sake, in the meantime do everything that the government can possibly do on the basis of its own federal authority and responsibility.

There are other ministers in the chamber. First, there is the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury). I say to him that he has no excuse for holding back on the escalation of the pensions of retired civil servants and keeping it at that 2 per cent ceiling. On January 24, he told me that had to be tied in some way to the question of its relationship to the Canada Pension Plan. If that is going to be delayed, why should retired civil servants have to wait all this time for this increase?

I say to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), as I said this morning, that he should talk turkey to Canadian National Railways and talk the same kind of language to the Canadian Pacific Railway also. He should tell these organizations that they should not leave this question of the escalating of their pensions in the state of limbo that it is in at the present time. This whole principle that pensions should be increased, not by some fixed limit as 2 per

### Supply

cent, but enough to enable people to keep up with the rising cost of living, has to be applied to all pensions across the board. I call on the appropriate person, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, who has more to do with pensions than anyone else, to press this point for all he is worth.

I was delighted to read the document tabled a few days ago by the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald), the report of the joint study group on the basic rate of pensions under the disability act. That joint committee, God bless its members, is not satisfied with an increase equal to the rise in the cost of living. That committee says that as veterans grow older, they are entitled to share in the increases in the standard of living that others are able to enjoy because of the growth in our economy, the rise in the gross national product, the rise in the wage index and the standard of living. It is a principle that members who have been around here for awhile have heard me proclaiming for a long, long time.

I insist that we will not have pensions that are worthy of the name until there is built into them provision to escalate in such a way that our retired people will be able to keep up, not only with the rising cost of living, but be able to participate in the rising standard of living.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The Minister of National Health and Welfare has had a real promotion from the kitchen cabinet, as the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) described it this morning, into the cabinet itself. It is a real promotion to be made minister of this department. I insist that he is in one of the most important portfolios in the cabinet, because the whole question of developing some kind of income security and certainty for the lives of our people, particularly in their later years, hangs on what he will do. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I call upon him to add to the good image he has created and the good impression I get of him. I call upon him to do that with some expedition. He can show this by tabling the notice of his bill to amend the Old Age Security Act this afternoon and moving on some of these other matters as well.

I hope the minister will move as quickly as he can on the escalation of the Canada Pension Plan benefits. Right now, people living across the river in Quebec receive an escalation of 3 per cent per year whereas under the Canada Pension Plan it is 2 per cent. Somehow or other they have managed that without any increase in the premiums that people must pay. There is one province that started it. I do not shout with great joy about 3 per cent because I do not think it is enough, but at least Quebec has established that it should not stay at 2 per cent. I press for zeal and determination on the part of the Minister of National Health and Welfare in this whole field of the escalation of benefits.

I will now get back to the bill that I think we should have in this House on Monday. As we are now going to get rid of the supply bill a lot sooner than we thought would be the case, the coast will be clear. There is no reason to delay dealing with it next week before we get to the February 19 budget and the budget debate. I urge that the effective date in the bill be retroactive to January 1. In the