

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

pensions of federal civil servants already retired. We did not prescribe an exact formula but we did lay down principles. I want to say that it was our understanding when the matter was referred to the committee and during the whole time that we were dealing with it, that if we came up with an agreement in the committee that something should be done the government would follow that recommendation with the appropriate legislation.

On May 8, in the closing hours of the last session, the report was tabled. I asked the President of the Treasury Board if action would be taken on it soon. Well, the answer was that the matter was under consideration. I asked my question again on May 15, again on May 25 and again on June 2. All we are getting now is the assurance that the matter is under consideration. But, the most recent answer is this reply by the Prime Minister that he cannot give the assurance this matter will be dealt with before we break for a summer recess.

Mr. Speaker, if the government asks this house to rise for the summer without dealing with this issue, this will be as cruel a hoax as it has ever perpetrated. These people have had the right to believe since last June, a year ago, when the President of the Treasury Board said he was willing for the matter to be referred to the special committee for study, that something would be done about it. This right was re-enforced when the matter was referred to the committee, and the right was further re-enforced when the committee composed of members representing all parties in this house made a unanimous recommendation in its report to the house on May 8.

Now, it is sheer nonsense for the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) to stand up and give us this old line about dealing with other matters that are before the house. I hope my anger is misplaced. I hope our retired civil servants are not going to be misled or fooled on this matter. But all we get in the house or in the meetings of the house leaders discussing the business of parliament is the fact that between now and the summer recess we are only going to deal with estimates, so far as we can, and two or three little matters of legislation that really do not amount to very much. Never has this item been listed as one of the things with which we are to deal before we rise for a summer recess. I say that this would be a cruel hoax, that this parliament will be acting in an immoral fashion if it goes away for a summer break without having dealt with this issue.

Do not tell us it is a complex matter. It was dealt with in 1957 by an item in the estimates and then in 1958 by legislation. I am sure that the departments concerned have been working on it for months. They ought to have been. We have been discussing the question for 20 years, generally; we have been discussing it specifically for the last 12 months.

There is no excuse for not going ahead with this measure. So far as I am concerned, this parliament should not take a summer recess until we have dealt with the problem of increasing the pensions of our retired civil servants. If we put it off until the fall hundreds of people who are waiting for the increase will not be alive to receive it. I urge that there be no more of this kind of answer but that we be assured that there will be action on this issue before we break for a summer recess.

Mr. James E. Walker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the hon. member who just resumed his seat feels very keenly about this matter. I feel I would be remiss in replying to him tonight if I did not point out to this house, and to those civil servants affected, that this question is very much on the minds of the majority of the members of this House of Commons. It is particularly on the minds of the members of this house who have served or are serving on the joint special committee on the public service which was set up by this government.

Mr. Knowles: By this house.

Mr. Walker: But on the initiative taken by the government. No one is more concerned about civil servants, both past and present, than this government, which initiated legislation that brought into being collective bargaining. This is something which had not been done for 20 years or longer. This legislation brought about a new régime in personnel relationships between the government and its employees. The committee which had been considering the matter of civil service pensions was doing so, as my hon. friend has stated, because the subject matter was referred to them by the government.

Mr. Knowles: By the house.

Mr. Walker: On the initiative of the government.

Mr. Knowles: Oh, my eye.

Mr. Walker: The committee reported its findings and recommendations to the President of the Treasury Board. The government