

Old Age and Veterans' Pensions

and listened to, that your needs are not only appreciated but that they are prompting our thought and action in many, many areas: in our determination to curb inflation; in our new tax proposals; in our study of all social security measures.

The government has given a great deal of consideration to increases in federal pensions, old age pensions, retired civil servants, as well as veterans. I am confident that when the whole social security review is completed, a policy will be established in keeping with our well-rounded national social welfare program.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, on August 21 last, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) announced increases in pension benefits. In fact, the headline on his announcement was "Pension Benefits up Again in 1970". In the course of that announcement, the minister made much of the fact—and they are certainly correct figures—that 1,600,000 Canadians would benefit under the increase in the old age security pensions and that over 780,000 old age security pensioners would receive the guaranteed income supplement. If we look at that announcement of last August and at the record and attitudes of the Liberal government, we can only think "big deal". In their usual, inadequate, too late fashion, the announcement, which was in accordance with the 2 per cent allowable increases provision, amounted to \$1.58 a month for old age security pensioners and 63 cents a month for those who receive the full guaranteed income supplement. If you were receiving the full \$30, you would receive an additional 63 cents.

The five and dime store attitude of this government is apparent when it comes to old age pensions, but when it comes to themselves and their corporate friends they have vision, imagination and lots of money. The government acts in a manner similar to the attitude of certain persons to the south in the United States when referring to the poor and the coloured. It is said they need now to be treated with benign neglect.

Any Member of Parliament who says he cannot support this motion, particularly if he is on the government side, and at the same time approves expenditures of public funds for other purposes not nearly as necessary or urgent, is either being hypocritical or is purely partisan and cold-hearted. There have been increases in the salaries of executive assistants, the regional desks and the staff of the Prime Minister. Some of these increases may have been necessary in the name of

better government, but no one can suggest that they have a higher priority than increases in the old age pensions.

Millions of dollars were spent on the *Bona-venture*. Everyone, including the Liberals, admits that this was a mistake. However, it did have a very high priority. An obsolete and ineffective non-defensive air defence system is being maintained. Surely, what we are doing in the way of pensions for Members of Parliament, and the almost indecent gabble by some backbenchers about what they need in the way of indemnities and expenses, should not have near the priority that is due old age pensioners. We do not need any more patronizing, gratuitous and unconscionable remarks such as "We have had enough of this free stuff" by the Prime Minister and others.

These kinds of pensions are a matter of right, not of privilege. When this Parliament refuses to act quickly on them, it is in fact denying the rights of Canadians. Much is made of how we must fight inflation. It is said these increases would be inflationary. The government asks where the money will come from.

In their fight against inflation the government attacks those who cannot defend themselves. They attack those who not only did not cause inflation, but who are the first and worst victims of inflation. Others can defend themselves in an inflationary situation. They can not only defend themselves, but they can live with it. Corporations do very well defending themselves. Organized workers defend themselves through bargaining and, if necessary, strikes. The wealthy individuals can defend themselves. In an inflationary situation the unorganized, the farmers, fishermen, recipients of veterans' allowance and old age pensioners are victims who cannot defend themselves.

The hon. member for Fort William (Mr. Badanai) stated that an increase in pension to \$150 a month would cost \$1 billion. Mr. Speaker, I only say "So what?" There are places where this money can be obtained through a reallocation of priorities in present government expenditures. There should be a proper levying and more taxing of those who have the wealth in Canada. One need only look at the latest figures on net profits of corporations after taxes to see what is happening. They escape paying their fair share of the tax burden in Canada. If one wishes to accomplish two things at the same time, raise additional funds for old age pensioners and