

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

If the government deliberately and consciously intends to flout the will of a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons then let it have the courage to say so. At least, we will respect its honesty. We who believe in responsible and parliamentary government will then be ready to test the mood of this house. Any government which would so disregard the plight of so many of its former employees would, in my opinion, deserve ignominious and dishonourable defeat.

The unanimous recommendations of the joint committee presented to parliament on May 8, 1967, almost five months ago, were direct and simple. I read them as follows:

In the committee's view, the government should do what it reasonably can to protect and preserve, or failing that to restore in some measure the original purchasing power of the contributory pensions which, under the Public Service Superannuation Act, and similar enactments, it has provided for its retired employees.

With this consideration in mind, your committee recommends immediate action by the government, to up-date and extend the provisions of the Public Service Pension Adjustment Act (1959).

Then on the next page I read:

The committee recommends that any plan to improve the position of these retired employees... should be capable of quick and early implementation in the form of legislation in the next session of this parliament—

That language is familiar to some members who are in the house tonight. In every particular the joint committee said "immediate," but the government's response has been the most fabulous procrastination of all time.

Where is my good friend, the Minister of Public Works (Mr. McIlraith), whose most important role is that of the hon. member for Ottawa West? Where does he stand on this issue? He is the key to the whole situation. He is the minister of the crown whose views are basically significant.

I invite him to get off his complacent posterior, to stand up for the people he represents, to force an immediate and favourable decision from cabinet. If he cannot get a decision favourable to the public servants, active and retired, of Ottawa West, then he should resign in protest from the cabinet. Deliberately I mix every metaphor to say to the hon. gentleman from Ottawa West that he cannot any longer straddle the fence with an ear to the ground, grinding an axe, until the rust eats into his soul and while his constituents suffer grave hardships.

[Mr. Bell (Carleton).]

Great Britain, France, the United States and most of our own provinces have succeeded in developing formulae to increase pensions of their former employees, without injustice to other citizens. What is wrong with us that we fiddle, faddle, dawdle, and delay? The time for final and decisive action has arrived.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken in terms indignant and angry. These are the moods I feel. I am sick, tired, and fed up to the teeth with evasion and, beyond anything else, I want action. That is the reason I have spoken with emotion and directness. I say to the hon. gentleman who is to reply tonight, do not give us any more of this run-around, this business of active consideration, or all the other types of evasive action. I say to him, come to grips tonight with the issues—tonight, not next January, not next June, not two years from next June, but tonight.

Mr. J. E. Walker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous parliamentary secretary I find myself unable to congratulate the hon. member who has just spoken. I am unable to congratulate him for his intemperate speech.

When the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell) earlier today asked this question of the minister and received a straightforward, honest reply to the effect that the government was giving the matter the most serious and diligent attention I was sure that would completely satisfy the house and him. However, we have just heard—I knew what would happen tonight and this was written before I heard the hon. member—that such is not the case in so far as the hon. member is concerned.

I served on the joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on the public service along with the hon. member for Carleton who made a very valuable contribution to the deliberations of that committee. The members of the committee worked in harmony. We had the same objectives. As I say, I served on that committee with the hon. member and I now tell him something he already knows; no hon. member and no government is more determined and anxious to work out a feasible proposal which can be spelled out in legislation for the benefit of superannuated civil servants than this Liberal government and its supporters.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Do it.

Mr. Walker: There is no government that is more determined to work out a feasible,