

was in the \$5,999 bracket and he had about 20 years service. This is an indication that the affluent society does not occur within this supposedly select group. Like all other people, this group requires the kind of thing that the bill provides. We have known for a long time that the 2 per cent escalation was not reasonable for retired public servants, and even at this late date we are grateful that it has been removed from the legislation. We will do our part in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

Many members hear from former members of the RCMP and the railway people who are suffering now because they find that their pensions are insufficient. There is not a group mentioned in the bill from which I have not had letters revealing their anxiety and I imagine all hon. members have received letters as well. Much more must be done than is provided in this bill.

I was sorry to hear the minister indicate that the change in the Canada Pension Plan will have to wait. Just the other day I expressed the view that I was shocked that discussions on these matters had not taken place with the provinces long ago. How long do we have to watch inflation growing more burdensome before something is done about it? We should have had that consultation and that approval already. I cannot accept the thought that any province would not agree to an increase on the 2 per cent and I cannot believe that such consultation would take more than a couple of hours. I do not think it is necessary to wait for a plenary session of the ministers of social welfare of the whole nation. It is inconceivable that any province would stand in the way of approval, but I think it is up to the dominion government to move on this. I am not content that it should be let go for a while longer and when it is before us this party will help facilitate its passage.

In all of this the hundreds of thousands of Canadians on private pensions and the poor people who have no pension plan, have been left out. They are the victims of maladministration and, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) himself revealed the other day, they are the victims of a faltering conception of how bad the problem is and a limping approach toward remedial action. One wonders how long it will take those who have responsibility to be fully aware of the urgency of the situation. To govern a nation entails a heavy responsibility. That responsibility becomes tremendous when the economy of a country is in the state of our economy.

● (1220)

The government of the day, in its mental approach to these problems, should act as if an emergency faced it. There is no need for the languid approach which says, "We will leave it until October; we will slap another 2 per cent on here and, in the interim, add a bit to family allowances." Why need the family allowance be \$12 instead of \$20? These discussions were promised months ago. Did somebody say that \$20 is too much? If a bill can provide for \$12, surely it can provide for \$20. I am no genius at mathematics, but even I can see that. Surely, if it was thought last spring that the need was for \$20, what has happened to the cost of living cannot make one say that the need has diminished to \$12. If someone last spring thought that \$20 was an adequate figure for a family allowance, how could it be said, after the way food costs

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have been soaring in the months since the original announcement, that the increase should now only be up to \$12. These things are incomprehensible, indefensible—

**Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** And reprehensible.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** —and reprehensible, as the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles), who has a fine vocabulary, suggests.

There are some problems connected with this bill. Questions will be raised by my colleagues. One is somewhat leery of the general principle whereby certain people, namely, the contributors to these pensions, are to be soaked for inflation which they did not create, and soaked at the say-so of the government that created it. There is something unfair about that. It is not retired civil servants who are responsible for our roaring inflation.

**Mr. Baker:** Nor the serving ones.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Nor is it the serving ones, either. Yet the government, which is responsible, says to civil servants, "Okay, we will increase your contributory responsibilities because we are responding to this and dealing with it." That attitude reminds one of the old president of the treasury board. That is the kind of thing I would have expected him to do in his dealings with postal workers and people at the suffering end of the prevailing wage rate. Was it Shakespeare who said, "For this relief, much thanks"? I would be begrudging if I did not say, "For what is there, thanks; we appreciate it." But this is long overdue and it is not enough. At least it is something. For that we are thankful.

Having made that observation, I will take my seat and assure the minister that, despite the observations I have made, we will not stand in the way of this legislation. I hope he will show an unaccustomed willingness to listen to others and accept from some of my colleagues helpful suggestions on how best to cope with this problem which the people referred to in this legislation have borne for far too long in this country.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) that any bill relating to any facet of pensions raises the whole, broad question of the adequacy or inadequacy of many of the pensions of the people of this country. I also agree with him very strongly when he says that the problem of inflation hits pensioners with particular force and, aware of the problem as we are today, it behooves us to make improvements in all our pension plans. Indeed, I urge that when we talk about the need for improving all pension plans, we think not only of those plans that come under the aegis of government, but that we increase our concern about the adequacy and safety of the provisions of private pension plans.

There is legislation on the federal statute books and on the statute books of our provinces, I believe, which provides standards for pension plans. There are also provisions in the income tax regulations which do the same thing. In my view, these items of legislation and these regulations need to be overhauled. We need to take a close look at the whole pension picture in this country.