

Economic Conditions

In Austria, the normal retirement age is 65 for men and women. In Belgium, the normal age of retirement is age 65 for men and age 60 for women. In Britain, the normal pension age for men is 65 and for women it is 60. In France the normal retirement age is 65. However, a worker may retire at age 60 with 70 per cent of his pre-retirement income. In Germany, the regular retirement age is 65 but females may retire at age 60. In Israel the normal retirement age is 65 for men and 60 for women. In Italy the normal maximum retirement age is 60 for men and 55 for women. Many of these countries struggled in the economic world. They have large costs for energy and excuses which the Minister of Finance likes to pretend that we have, only they are the ones who actually have them. But these countries are able to look after their senior citizens far better than we do here in Canada.

I wish I had more time because I would like to talk about the cynicism of the Prime Minister. We have had two important debates in this House in the last while. This is one, and the Prime Minister has not participated in it. The other debate was on the constitution. He did not participate in that either. We have a Prime Minister who likes to be there for the kudos but he does not like to slug it out here or be criticized in the House or be asked to explain his policies in depth. He is not here today. He was not here last night. He has not participated in the constitutional debate and now we understand that it is likely the government may not bring in its amendments until it is too late for us to do anything about them.

We had the example of the Polish question the other day when the Prime Minister had the gall to lecture us about unity and how important it was in the west. When the NATO nations lined up and voted, what happened? We withdrew. He wanted to stand to one side and let the other 14 agree on something. We would be different. It is no wonder the Canadian people are cynical about government and politicians. It is no wonder that we are angry.

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is about one o'clock and I understand it would be the interpretation of the Chair to rise at one o'clock for the luncheon break. I have some idea about that interpretation, which I will not enter into now. However, there have been some discussions with the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Collenette) and as well with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) about the proper utilization of the time. Because there are a large number of members who wish to speak, I ask for consent of the House and ask you, Mr. Speaker, to put the matter before the House for unanimous consent to sit during the hour from 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. In this way the debate can carry on and members can continue to speak. If you could canvass members of the House, I would be grateful.

Mr. Collenette: Mr. Speaker, we agree with the suggestion as presented by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) inasmuch as it would be somewhat difficult to delay an emergency debate for a lunch hour.

● (1300)

We would therefore agree to sit through the proposed hour to two o'clock which we understand was going to be proposed. There will be some other discussions about tabling of documents or committee reports later on, but we will not be in a position to deal with that until later.

Mr. Knowles: Since it is an emergency debate, perhaps we should stay with it. If we use this hour for debate, maybe that means we will finish an hour earlier tonight than we might otherwise finish.

An hon. Member: Or tomorrow.

Mr. Knowles: Yes, or tomorrow.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Just so you will know, Mr. Speaker, we will be approaching you again at two o'clock about the matter of introduction of bills, reports from standing committees, and the idea of being able to have some answers to questions on the order paper, which I understand the government is prepared to give today. I think that would be appropriate before we leave.

Mr. Collenette: I should just emphasize we have not come to a full agreement. There is a like-mindedness between myself and the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton but I have not concluded discussions with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre on one of the points just raised. We will get back to you, Mr. Speaker, within the next hour.

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some comments on two quite separate but very important issues as I see them in this very important emergency debate. One will perhaps be a continuation of some pertinent comments on the Canadian beef cattle industry made by the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Jarvis) when he made some excellent comments this morning. The other aspect I want to touch on is the implications of the new national energy policy for my own southeast corner of Alberta, my constituency of Medicine Hat, and how they will impact on some specific communities.

I first want to move to some specific comments about my own cattle industry. Interest rates have now become a major operating cost in the total cattle industry, especially the feeding sector. The two major costs right now are the cost of feed, of barley in Alberta and western Canada, and corn in Ontario. The other one that has amounted to a very significant cost is the cost of money or interest rates. At today's high interest rates, that becomes very significant.

It is a major factor in a clearly indicated trend not to rebuild our beef cattle breeding herds. That is the bottom line of the impact of higher operating costs and the uncertainty created by interest rates. That is an upturn in our beef breeding herds which should have started two or three years ago and has not developed. This last touch of record high interest rates sort of put the coffin nails in. It will discourage it even longer. This will be unfortunate.