

Statute Law Amendment Act, 1970

certain persons in receipt of pensions payable out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and to amend certain Acts that provide for the payment of those pensions, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I tried to outwait some of my colleagues, but I did not make it.

An hon. Member: You outweigh some of them.

Mr. Peters: I outweigh them, but I did not outwait them. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) made a number of comments to which I should like to refer. I agree with some of them but I disagree with others.

He referred to the way the government has gone about introducing changes in the Pensions of Members of Parliament. There are very few things more difficult when you hold office than making a decision which will result in a benefit to yourself. I am sure this has happened to most senior executives who have to make decisions which result in benefits to themselves and those who might follow them. For that reason I am of the opinion that the method which was used, and the fact that the Curtis report was made public, was a good way of handling what is without doubt a difficult problem in relation to benefits to people who are involved in making the decision.

● (2:40 p.m.)

I believe that the Curtis report indicated to those who read it the many difficulties involved in a consideration of pensions for Members of Parliament and the fact that there are many variables. I believe there should be as close as possible a relationship between the studies that have been done and the expectations because I, as one Member of Parliament, do not agree we should do something for ourselves in an economical manner which would be contrary to a policy we would be willing to see operate in other fields. There are members who believe an affluent society must be bad. There is the old Protestant adage that to be poor must be good, that hell exists on earth and that the worse one rewards oneself here the better it will be somewhere else. I never believed that. But certainly this type of thinking has plagued the party to which I have belonged for many years. There was always the wish to

accomplish for everyone what you wanted for yourself. I think most people agree with the words Woodsworth used to the effect that what we want for ourselves we wish for all. I believe this applies to pensions as well. What I should like to see accomplished for myself I should like to see accomplished for everyone.

There is no doubt that Members of Parliament have been concerned with veterans' pensions, not only in terms of the Woods report but in terms of having the basic pension of the veteran raised substantially. I think everyone in Canada believes we should escalate pensions to the greatest extent possible. I believe there is a basic concern on the part of all Canadians that everyone should have as high a pension as the country can afford. I have heard some of my colleagues—and perhaps I have done so myself—speak about pensions like the pension of a former governor of the Bank of Canada. There was some monkey-business in that case. When it seemed that he would not hold that position for long, the pension was increased. Some concern was expressed about this, and I believe it was a legitimate concern. I think it would be very unfair to tax everyone with an income of less than \$5,000 a year, \$500 or \$100 a year in order to pay all the old age pensioners more money than the country can afford. But I think it would be as great a crime not to pay them the highest amount the country can afford.

If I might return to the matter of the parliamentary pensions, I think a long time ago we should have devised a better system to maintain our wage and pension structure. I think this matter should have been taken out of Parliament. I believe it is a matter which should come under another government agency which would be in a position to make decisions. I am one who believes so far as pensions are concerned, unlike wages, that so long as one is willing to put in the money he should be able to get full value from it.

I carry a \$10,000 20-year endowment policy. I will never get more out of it than I have paid in. I think perhaps I am a darned fool to carry it and I would not take out such a policy today. I think perhaps I was stupid. However, I hope and believe that some day if I live long enough I will get that \$10,000 back. I will have put it in, so I should get it back. I would hope that if I wished to make the type of contribution that would be required to produce a certain type of pension I should be able to do so. I have been around in the