

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

[English]

### HEALTH AND WELFARE

#### SUGGESTED EXTENSION OF AGE OF COMPULSORY RETIREMENT

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of enacting legislative proposals to raise the compulsory retirement age from 65 to 70 for any person aged 65 or more who does not so wish to retire and is prepared to give up his/her entitlements to any private pension plan or annuity.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I hope no persons over the age of 65 have died in the interval and that we will not prejudice the purpose of this motion. Briefly, I do not claim that I am the first to speak on this matter; I know in the other place there is a motion or some procedure related to it.

I am sure all hon. members have received, at one time or another, correspondence from constituents objecting to mandatory retirement at the age of 65. Over the years we have seen a population growing older, but in better condition. There are many instances where we have been amazed at men and women aged 65 being put out to pasture compulsorily. Retirement at age 65 is a legend from the make work philosophy of the depression years that has continued too long as an anachronism.

We cannot afford to lose the expertise, the physical strength and the productive capabilities of men and women aged 65 or more who are able to carry on their employment. Population studies in this country indicate that there has been a drastic reduction in the number of Canadian children being born, and that before too long we will face a domestically generated manpower crisis within this country. In part, my motion will take steps to alleviate that danger and to best utilize the capabilities in this country on a voluntary basis.

My motion does not refer to forcing people to work beyond 65. It does not penalize them, if they work, from drawing old age security benefits for which they have contributed. It is agreed that old age security will start at age 65, but it is not at the support level; it is part of the income that a person 65 or more receives from a variety of sources. Much of the post-65 support comes from subsidized housing in senior citizens' homes, dental care programs, programs for glasses and programs for additional drugs. It varies for persons over 65. Persons over the age of 65 have guaranteed income supplements available to them, income from private pensions and from one source or another.

It would be a form of national lunacy if this country did not say to people aged 65 or more that they must retire from certain occupations. Compulsory retirement at age 65 is rigidly adhered to in the public service and in a number of industrial concerns. In fact, it is compulsory under the Canada Pension Plan. Also, under the unemployment insurance plan there are discouragements or deterrents to persons working over the age of 70 because they cannot be insured under that plan. I do not think that is the answer to the employment

### *Age of Retirement*

problem. What we have here is the question of utilizing the capabilities of Canadians who, having reached the age of 65, are still able and willing to contribute. They can make that decision.

I should like to refer hon. members to a bill recently passed in the House of Representatives in Washington. It has also been the subject of discussion in the United States Senate. I am referring to Bill HR-5383, to which reference is made in the Congressional Record of the House of Representatives under the date September 13, 1977. It is a piece of legislation amending a five-year old bill. It is entitled Age Discrimination and Employment Act Amendments, 1977. Earlier this year the House of Commons passed a bill on human rights indicating that there shall not be discrimination by reason of age, which I am afraid is observed more in the breach than in compliance with it. Compulsory retirement at the age of 65 is contained in the immigration regulations.

I should like to return to the United States legislation to which I referred a moment ago. There was some controversy about it and I cannot say that there was unanimity between the United States Senate and the House of Representatives.

● (1722)

It is not my purpose this afternoon to convince my colleagues that they should adopt the motion. This is the first time this subject has really hit the floor of the House for discussion. I want to initiate discussion among hon. members in order to examine this question in depth. It would be my hope that, rather than talking out this motion—which is the usual way—and having it go to the bottom of the list, our colleagues across the way on the government side would agree that at the adjournment time a motion be made that the subject matter of this motion and of related matters be referred to the appropriate House committee—it could be the committee on health and welfare—for public hearings and to receive representations.

I do not want to cram this idea down anyone's throat because I think it is a worthy idea but, on the other hand, there may be some points that organized labour might find difficult to accept with regard to this type of legislation. There might be difficulties from an industrial point of view, or from those organizations which provide pension plans. But, if I may say so, if it can be done in the United States, I think it can be done here in Canada. Let us consider the following:

The ADEA of 1967 was designed to promote employment of older persons based on their ability to perform in the job rather than on age and to prohibit arbitrary age discrimination in employment. The current act extends coverage to individuals who are at least 40 years of age but less than 65. The upper age limit of 65 was selected because it was a customary retirement age—

I would say it is one that grew out of a depression mentality. —and the age at which many public and private pension benefits became payable rather than by any scientific objective standard. In 1974, protection to state, local and federal employees was added.

I am citing the proposer of the bill, Congressman Hawkins, who said the following:

Mr. Chairman, I believe the time has come to amend the age discrimination in employment act to take the essential first step toward eliminating mandatory