

Government Organization Act, 1970

government take the necessary action in order that these civil servants can be brought within the provisions of the amended act.

The Chairman: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, I asked for a commitment from the minister as this is a very important matter. There are a number of senior people involved. These are people who would be entitled to the benefits of this provision but are now at the mercy of the government of Newfoundland. I should like to feel that the minister will officially inform the government of Newfoundland of amendments to the Superannuation Act, advising that government what action should be taken to bring these civil servants under it.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, I am sure the hon. gentleman will understand that I would be glad to transmit officially and, if you like, formally not only the proclamation of this act, when that occurs, but also all the provisions of the new statute for whatever action by the government of Newfoundland might be appropriate.

I think, however, I would have some hesitancy in attempting to tell that government how to behave in matters which, under the terms of the Act of Union, are within their jurisdiction rather than ours. Perhaps it ill becomes one government to give lectures to another. We seek to proceed on the basis of co-operation on the assumption that in joint matters each government will behave responsibly and intelligently.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if my remarks are completely appropriate, following the remarks of the hon. member for St. John's East, but there are a number of public servants in the province who were employed by the provincial government prior to 1949, or at least in the employ of organizations other than the federal government. Recently, I wrote the President of the Treasury Board asking for the names of people who would be affected by any amendments to the Superannuation Act so that these people could buy back their time prior to 1949 as full fledged members of the public service. Many of these people went to work as public servants in 1939 and right down through 1940 to 1949. Not being classified as fully fledged members of the public service until after 1949, they lost out severely in respect of superannuation. I understand that efforts are being made or that an agreement is being arrived at whereby they can buy back their time prior to 1949 and thus enhance their position.

I contacted the Treasury Board and was informed by the Acting President a few weeks ago that the names of the individuals affected could not be made available to me. I receive letters from these people, basically from Gander where there are 500 people with the Department of Transport or other departments which serve the aviation needs of that airport. They ask me to advise them of

[Mr. McGrath.]

their present status in view of the fact that they went to work in 1939, 1943, 1946, or whatever the case may be. In order to communicate their wishes to the Treasury Board, I need to know the names and status of these people. I wonder whether the minister could have an official of his department make available the names of public servants who would be affected by such a change in their status. I understand that already a good deal of good work has been done. I think it would be useful to public servants—it is of no interest to me personally—if we could know where they stand and how the Treasury Board and the provincial authorities combined are able to help them in respect of their problems.

Mr. Drury: The request to provide a list of public servants who would be affected by this legislation is rather a difficult one to answer. I think perhaps the government has an obligation to see that all those on whom this new legislation will have an impact are advised of their new rights and options. We are undertaking to do this or will undertake to do it internally. What the hon. member in effect is asking for, however, is a list of the public service voters in his constituency.

Public servants in the employ of the federal government, whether they were transferred from the Public Service of Newfoundland or have entered the Public Service of Canada in other ways, will all be affected but in different ways. As I suggested, I think that rather than providing the hon. member with a list of all public servants in Newfoundland, the government has an obligation to advise the individuals directly and precisely of his rights and obligations.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Chairman, the President of the Treasury Board obviously is pretty knowledgeable in this area and I am sure knows what he is talking about. However, I believe the number of people involved would be 150 public employees of the federal government in the province of Newfoundland. I understand that is the number, although it might be more or less. The problem to which I am referring does not involve every public servant in the Public Service of Canada. These people qualify under the specific terms of the union of the province with Canada which was consummated in 1949. There are only a handful of people involved. Certainly, the Treasury Board could make available their names. These names should be made available if we are to make representation on their behalf. I am wondering if we cannot get this information because the matter is considered to be very complex, whether there is a written agreement or whether there is some idiosyncrasy involved. What is the reason we cannot obtain the names of these people? I want to know.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, I think any member may inquire on behalf of a member of the public service what the general provisions are. But I am not sure it would be appropriate for the government to release information regarding the financial status of any public servant in response to a general demand for an analysis of the individual's financial circumstances. Now, if the