

State Pensions

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I understand very well the explanations given a moment ago by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and it is not the first time since I came to this House that we are faced with such a problem.

I also understood that the President of the Privy Council had considered suggestions made to find a way to amend the rules to allow some amendments to bills, provided the House agrees.

We have been asked, Mr. Speaker, to give a few explanations about the motions. As far as Motion No. 6 is concerned, as all hon. members know, there are two retirement pension plans for Members of Parliament and senators.

In 1970, hon. members had been given a time limit to decide which plan to adhere to, either the established one or the new one. Since a number of members have not chosen yet, this amendment proposes to extend in a way the permission given in 1970 to allow a member to choose the new plan while he is still a member of this House.

The other amendments are added to that one to allow officials to administer the program as suggested in motion No. 7.

Those are the only explanations I can give on the matter because, after all, reading the act governing members of Parliament pension plan is all one needs to understand. No special provisions are added. It is simply recognition of a legislation for all members of Parliament who wish to benefit from it.

● (1550)

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The situation seems to be rather clear, and motion No. 3 is not in any procedural difficulty.

In respect of motions Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 and 9, notwithstanding that they are accompanied by a Royal recommendation these motions appear to go beyond the amending bill and attempt to get at the statute which the present bill seeks to amend. Clearly, they could not be dealt with at this time, or for that matter at any time, I suggest, without the consent of the House.

Finally, motions Nos. 6, 7 and 8 in the name of the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert)—

[Translation]

—motions Nos. 6, 7 and 8 in the name of the hon. member for Bellechasse cause some problems. First, they propose the spending of money and the unanimous consent of the House is not enough to overcome the difficulty. Moreover, those motions seek to amend the act itself and not Bill C-52.

Yet there is no such recommendation from His Excellency, and motions Nos. 6, 7 and 8 involve an expense of money. Then, they require not only the unanimous consent of this House but also the recommendation from His Excellency.

In the absence of this recommendation, it is therefore impossible to put those motions now.

[Mr. Francis.]

[English]

First of all, motion No. 3 does not require the consent of the House, and motions Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 and 9 can only be dealt with at this time with the consent of the House. I might ask now, does the House consent to deal with those motions which are before it in those numbers at the present time?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I do not withhold consent, but I should like to enter a caveat with the House leader that this has happened four or five times during this parliament. The other day a bill was brought in that was out of order; now with the government's knowledge these items are out of order. It seems to me that if it were not for the foresight the other day of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) and of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), and of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre again today, this House would have had a situation perpetrated upon it that many of us are not capable of discerning ourselves.

An hon. Member: Particularly the cabinet.

Mr. Peters: My colleague says even the cabinet. I presume there are members of cabinet who do know this today, but did not know it the other day.

I suggest that the day may come when no one can bring these circumstances to Your Honour's attention. It seems to me we have members of a very sloppy civil service addressing themselves to this problem, or else they are trying to take advantage of or abuse their responsibility to parliament.

While I am prepared to give consent, I certainly hope that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) will see that this does not happen again. It happened with supply, and it happened with this bill with the knowledge of some of the privy councillors. As a member of parliament I expect our civil servants to be more responsible and know what they are doing. If they do know what they are doing then it looks as if they are trying to put something over on somebody. That is not their role and not their responsibility.

Your Honour should not be put in the position of having to make decisions which affect the government and the operation of parliament very seriously and of having to rule on these matters which should not arise at all. That they have arisen in the last several weeks on a number of occasions indicates neglect at some level. We have appreciated Your Honour's indulgence and decisions in these matters, but I think the President of the Privy Council should have his fingers rapped for not having made sure that the civil service did not present things that were not covered by the Royal recommendation, and that other matters are not in order. I will give consent this time, but I think everybody is being put upon by the civil servants when they prepare this kind of legislation.

Mr. Speaker: May I say again that motions Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 and 9 can only be dealt with upon the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent that those motions be put forward at this time?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.