

Government Organization Act, 1970

election campaign, had promised jobs, additional salaries and rewards. The time has come for rewards and this is why we cannot, Mr. Speaker, approve this bill unreservedly, though we are against pollution. Besides, we said repeatedly in this House that it should have been checked years ago. But the present government merely studied the problem and referred it to the provinces which lack the monetary and financial means necessary to face their responsibilities, because presently, the Constitution grants them responsibilities in areas such as education, public utilities and others.

● (4:40 p.m.)

However, the federal government kept for itself all monetary powers, and because it does not put any funds at the disposal of the provinces to enable them to carry out their responsibilities, for the past 100 years, there has been perpetual conflict, as the provinces are at daggers drawn with the federal government. They want to carry out their duties, but the federal government, on the other hand, is hindering their progress by not supplying them and public agencies with the money needed for this. For that reason, we have had for years and whatever party is in power, perpetual conflict between the provincial governments and the federal government and between municipalities and school boards and the provincial governments.

We are members of the House of Commons, that is responsible for the financial administration of the country, but our hands are tied because of the supremacy of high finance. Why? Because governments that are elected through election funds are the first victims of the financial pollution of such electoral funds.

[English]

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, there has been a good deal of lively and scintillating debate on this bill this afternoon. If by way of contrast I enter it in a low key, I am none the less serious about two or three things I think ought to be said at the second reading stage.

Because there are to my knowledge many public servants who have worked for this country a good many years who would like the opportunity to retire early, as is provided in this legislation, I should like to see the bill passed and put on the statute books as quickly as possible. On the other hand, because in the same field, namely that of public service superannuation, there are provisions which I think are most unfair and could be used in an unfair and dictatorial manner over some of our public servants, I should like to see the bill set aside.

If I may jump ahead in my thoughts and offer a similar couplet, may I say that because of the provision in this bill for the establishment of a department of the environment, I should like to see the bill passed tonight, between government and parliament I think it should be torn and kicked out of the House as was done in the United Kingdom parliament once in respect of an iniquitous piece of legislation.

[Mr. Rondeau.]

It is mainly in respect of those two phases of the matter that I should like to make a few remarks at this time. I return, therefore, to the superannuation question. It is true that this bill will make it possible for quite a number of civil servants to retire with an immediate pension even though they have not reached the usual retirement age of 60 or 65.

Under this bill a letter carrier, for example, who has been working for the Post Office for 30 years, and who is now 55 and rather tired of carrying the mail around, would be able to retire with an immediate pension equal to 60 per cent of his average salary during his six best years. Likewise, anyone 55 years of age and over, but not yet 60, would be able to claim the benefits of this bill and retire early with an immediate pension.

There is also provision for retirement between the ages of 50 and 55. The several formulae set out in respect of this matter make it clear that if one retires earlier than the age of 55, even though he has passed aged 50, he would not get what otherwise would have been a full pension, but one reduced by a certain percentage for each year he is short of age 55 or each year he is short of a certain number of years of service.

In so far as there are public servants who would like to do this, even though the pension they might get would be quite low, this is a privilege or an opportunity being offered to them which quite a few might wish to accept, although I suspect there will be more advantage taken of the provision to retire at age 55 than there will be of the provision to retire below that age, because at age 55 at least one can get a full pension for the number of years he has worked up to that point. For those who retire below age 55 the reduction formula stares them in the face, and the prospect is not so inviting.

At any rate, in so far as the rights offered to our public servants by Part VII of this bill are put on a voluntary basis so that the public servants concerned may avail themselves of them if they wish to, this is good. That is the reason I say from that side of the coin I should like to see this bill on the statute books as soon as possible, for there are many public servants who are in fact waiting for it. I can understand this just from reading the legislation, but I can also say I have received a fair amount of correspondence from public servants in their middle fifties who are looking forward to availing themselves of the privileges of this legislation.

However, the other side of the coin, in so far as the superannuation portion of this bill is concerned, is in my view a rather ugly one. The other side of the coin is that the government may avail itself of the provisions of this Part VII and compulsorily retire people at age 55 on the pension they would get, or even down to age 50 on the reduced pensions provided by this legislation. I know the government will say it is fair to have it both ways. If you give a free right of retirement to the individual, should you not give a free right to the employer to retire that individual even if it is against his will? This is like the equity between one horse and one rabbit.