

benefits under the act. The government's decision in this regard will be indicated when the amending legislation is given first reading by the House of Commons.

Yours sincerely,

Mitchell Sharp.

I draw this to the attention of the Minister of National Revenue. I would draw it to the attention of the Minister of Finance if he were here. Here the Minister of Finance said to this official of this association representing retired civil servants that the government will not do anything at all now about the pensions of civil servants already retired, but then went on to say, regarding the benefits payable to widows of former civil servants that the government's decision in this regard will be indicated when the amending legislation is given first reading by the House of Commons. This letter was written on May 25, 1966, and the resolution preceding Bill C-193 was then on the order paper and due to be debated soon; as a matter of fact it was given first reading only a couple of weeks later, on June 6.

The contacts I have had with these people in the Federal Superannuates National Association were such as to indicate that they felt that whereas nothing was going to be done for the civil servants already retired, there was an announcement coming with regard to the basic formula under which pensions payable to widows are calculated. I will read again that governing sentence:

The Government's decision in this regard will be indicated when the amending legislation is given first reading by the House of Commons.

It was given first reading on June 6 this year, and then we learned that nothing was being done.

● (8:50 p.m.)

Surely, Mr. Chairman, if when this letter was written the case of the widows who seek an improvement in their basic formula was in the same category in the government's mind as the other one, the same answer would have been given to both points. But no—to the one point, a clear, categorical no; to the other point, "You will learn our decision when the bill is given first reading in the House of Commons." I should like to ask the Minister of National Revenue what happened between May 25 and June 6 to the government's decision with respect to the formula under which the pensions of widows of civil servants are calculated.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Chairman, I think it is pretty obvious from the legislation that the

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government decided not to change it at this particular time.

Mr. Knowles: That is obvious. As a matter of fact I had received this letter before we debated this matter on June 6. I thought from the letter that it was certain to be in the bill and it was a rude jolt to me when I asked the Minister of National Revenue, on the day when we had the resolution but did not yet have the bill, whether it was in there, and he told me that it was not. He is always such a generous, big-hearted man that I could hardly believe it. I suggest that it is not good enough for the minister simply to stand and say that obviously the government's decision was negative. Surely if at that point the government drew a distinction between these two issues and said with respect to raising the pensions of those already restored, "No change", but with respect to this basic formula, "Wait and see", the government is under some obligation to come through with a decision in favour of these people. Since we have not got it, may I ask the minister if the matter is under further consideration.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Chairman, the matter and the position of retired civil servants, and of course the matter of widows of retired civil servants, is under constant consideration; and, as I indicated in the committee, this matter is being actively considered by me, the Minister of Finance and other members of the government. But I think that all that is indicated in the kind of argument my hon. friend is trying to make is that at the time the letter was written the first matter had been decided and the second matter had not been decided, with respect to this particular legislation. With respect to this particular legislation the matter was later decided and as the hon. member can see, an amendment in this regard was not included in this legislation. I do not think I can add anything more.

Mr. Knowles: I must say, Mr. Chairman, that this is an unusual kind of letter to write if that is the case. If the government had not yet made up its mind, for the minister to write a letter to encourage these people to believe that something would not come in one case, and to tell them that something might come in the other, is not really fair.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When shall the said bill be read a third time?