

Pension Act

perhaps he did not use the English language with due facility. I wish I used the French language with the same facility that the minister uses the English language; I do indeed. The minister knows fairly well that we are not seeking to catch him out. What we are trying to do is to find the meaning and the final result of the change in the statute which he himself has introduced, and he needs no quarter on account of the use of the English language.

What then does the minister mean? Does he mean that the affairs of the commission have been unduly hampered by the fact that the salaries of the commission are set by parliament? If that is not the meaning, for what reason is this bill introduced and this provision made necessary? I should like to hear the minister say how the affairs or the administration of the commission's responsibility are prejudiced by the fact that its salaries are set by parliament at the present time.

The Deputy Chairman: Is the committee ready for the question?

Mr. Fulton: Perhaps the minister did not hear my question because he was engaged in conversation at the moment with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Lapointe: I heard the hon. member's question; I could not help hearing it. He repeated it many times in a different form. He made allusion to a statement that I was purported to have made and which I did not make in the course of my remarks.

Mr. Fulton: The minister will appreciate that I was not a member of the veterans affairs committee, owing to the fact the government has unduly restricted the size of its membership, and therefore I have not had the advantage of those previous exchanges with the minister; but I have asked him a perfectly simple question which is capable of a perfectly simple answer, if there were an answer. In what way have the activities of the commission, in the discharge of its responsibility, been unduly restricted by the fact that its salaries are set by act of parliament?

Mr. Lapointe: I never made the statement that they were.

Mr. Fulton: I am asking for an answer to the question.

Mr. Lapointe: I am answering you.

Mr. Fulton: I am sorry, the minister does not understand. I never suggested he had made that statement. I am asking him in what way would the discharge of its responsibility by the commission be impeded if the

statute were not being changed? In what way would they be less better able to discharge their responsibility if we left things as they are now, instead of making this change?

Mr. Lapointe: Mr. Chairman, it has nothing to do with this clause, and my hon. friend knows it. This statute, which creates the pension commission, and gives the right to the pension commission to adjudicate on veterans pensions, like other similar statutes, has to have sections which determine how salaries are paid. That is the only amendment that is being made, and regardless of whether the amendment is passed by this chamber, or whether the present section remains, it has nothing to do with the flexibility or the rigidity that the commission might have in making awards of pensions to veterans, and my hon. friend knows it as well as I do.

Mr. Fulton: That is exactly what I have—

Mr. Lapointe: But nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, if I may continue, like any other one of these bills we must have sections that look after the administration of the body, and this is one of them.

Mr. Fulton: In what way does it look after the affairs of the public better than the present position?

Mr. Lapointe: That is a matter of opinion.

Mr. Fulton: I am asking the minister to explain. We are always open to conviction.

Mr. Abbott: You were not here earlier.

Mr. Fulton: We are always open to conviction.

Mr. Abbott: Read *Hansard* tomorrow.

Mr. Lapointe: Read *Hansard* tomorrow and you will find out.

Mr. Fulton: It is very easy to say: "Read *Hansard* tomorrow" but to say "read *Hansard* tomorrow" does not indicate that the explanation will be any more valid than it is at the moment, so far as we have had it.

Mr. Abbott: Don't answer.

Mr. Fulton: The Minister of Finance says "don't answer". That is a typical attitude of the Minister of Finance, "don't answer".

Mr. Abbott: The hon. member should have spent the evening here instead of somewhere else.

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Fulton: Other members of the Liberal party say "sit down".