

*Supply—Annuities to Widows*

this house to cheeseparing policies with regard to amounts that are to be paid to certain of the more poorly paid officials in the employ of the government. Again and again during this session I have called attention to the fact that some people in the employ of the government are receiving only \$85 a month and nothing is done in the case of their widows. Nothing whatever is done should the children not be able to provide for their widowed mothers. In regard to old age pensions, if children are in a position to provide for their parents, old age pensions are not paid. I cannot see that we are justified in setting up one law for the well-to-do, the well-placed, the well-paid, and a totally different law for the poorly paid people who have no high official positions.

We are given no information at all with regard to the estate of the late Major Bell. We are told that he had quite a large estate, and that he left that estate entirely to his sons. Major Bell may have been wrapped up in his duties, as has been suggested, but surely he was very much lacking in forethought if he devoted the whole of his estate to his three sons and made no provision whatever for his wife. Further than that, while I do not know any of his three sons, or their circumstances, I cannot understand how sons who have inherited an estate from their father can leave their mother without any support whatever. The fact that they are sons of a highly respected official who served his country well does not change the situation in any degree. I cannot see that we can go on picking out here, there and yonder certain officials whose positions have enabled them to endear themselves to the public or to certain highly placed people in the government, and provide them annuities, and yet make no provision for the thousands of other government employees who, after all, in their own particular station have served the public just as faithfully as those who, throughout their lifetime, served in a high position and at a high salary.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I understand there is fundamental difference between this item and the one we were discussing a few moments ago, and that is, had Major Bell's payments to the superannuation fund been applied differently, this would have given his widow a pension to the extent of \$1,750 a year. Is that correct?

Mr. ROBB: Yes.

Mr. CAMPBELL: So far as that is concerned, it puts the matter in a different category from the other; but I want to remind the minister of this: there are many

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

civil servants who have paid large amounts of money into that fund and yet on their dismissal or death there is not a dollar coming to them or their dependents. I discussed a case with the minister last year of a poor man whose wife at that time was sick in hospital, and who was absolutely penniless. He had paid \$350 into the superannuation fund, but due to a technical fluke, if I may call it that, he was not able to secure anything. The treasury board did have the power under the act to repay him that money, but they absolutely refused to do so. If they were not prepared to do so in that case, where this man and his family were in a state of absolute penury, I say it is rank injustice to do it in this case. I am not complaining of the case before us so much as I am complaining of discrimination. If the law can be got around in this way or switched around—

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Is the hon. gentleman sure of his facts when he states that the treasury board refused to pay that man anything when they had authority to do it in a case such as he mentions? I have been a member of the treasury board ever since coming to Ottawa and I have no recollection of a case of that character ever having been refused by the board. While I am on my feet may I say that if it had not been for an oversight on the part of this official his widow would have been entitled to \$1,750 per annum under the law, and I do not believe that there is a man in this House of Commons who is going to deny to any individual what he would have been entitled to receive but for a technicality. I can assure my hon. friend that the treasury board will not turn down a case such as he mentions if the facts are properly brought before it.

Mr. CAMPBELL: They did turn it down.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I should like to be sure of that before taking my hon. friend's word, although, of course, I must accept his word.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I gave the facts to the Minister of Finance last year when his estimates were before the committee.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I have never known the treasury board to turn down a case that could possibly be justified, and I resent accusations of that character.

Mr. CAMPBELL: The same accusations were levelled at the Minister of Finance last year and he accepted them.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): All I have to say is that this minister is not accepting them.