

It seems to me that this Act is as clear as it is possible to make it, and I think that the sooner it is put on the statute book the better. No one will be hurt and the service will be improved. The leader of the Government is not speaking without some authority or without some experience; he is not speaking without some real knowledge of the situation and of the facts in connection with the departments. Therefore I have no hesitation in saying that I shall vote for the Bill.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: Honourable gentlemen, speaking in reference to the amendment offered by the honourable gentleman from Middleton (Hon. W. B. Ross), I might point out that it is to be observed that the Bill is to remain in force for one year. That being the case, it would not seem to me so important to give consideration to the amendment proposed by the honourable gentleman as it would be if this were permanent legislation. It is further to be observed that in all probability some form of permanent superannuation will eventually have to be arranged to fit the whole Civil Service. A few months ago, a survey of the Service was taken and it was found that there were approximately 1,300 people in the Service over the age of 65 years, many of whom were no longer able to give value for the compensation received. It is equally true that it is not possible for them to retire from active work and to discontinue receiving compensation; if they did, they would not be able to carry on and support themselves.

The Government has no desire, and I am sure Parliament has no desire, to treat these old and faithful employees in anything but a fair and proper manner. It is therefore deemed necessary, not only in justice to these people, but for the purpose of improving the efficiency of the public service, to make temporary provision whereby such employees as have reached the ages named and who are not able to give full time service should be retired upon the terms set out in the Bill, subject, of course, I assume, to the preparation and adoption at a future session of a permanent system of superannuation.

This measure also concerns economy as well as efficiency. A large number of these civil servants who have been in the service of the country for a number of years have reached the zenith of their ratings or gradings. They draw the top salaries, and doubtless have merited consideration in the past by reason of long service; but the situation at present is that juniors who

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are in receipt of much smaller salaries are in many instances performing the duties of these older employees. To continue in the Service employees who do not and who in many cases are not able to appear at their offices to render service is somewhat discouraging to these juniors. My experience covers perhaps the smallest department; but I have there one very pitiable case, so far as one's sympathy is concerned. It is the case of a man whom in my opinion it would be a very serious matter to retire without giving him sufficient compensation to enable him to take care of himself and his aged wife so long as he lives.

This Bill simply provides a modest but at the same time a very helpful retiring allowance. If the amendment of my honourable friend from Middleton (Hon. W. B. Ross) is seriously put forward and should prevail in this House, with the prospect of prorogation to-night—and I think we have already had notice from the Governor General—it is quite possible that this Bill would not get back to the House of Commons and be returned here again. The result would be that it would fall, which I think would be regrettable. Inasmuch as the whole matter will likely come under consideration at a future session, I express the hope that my honourable friend will not press his amendment.

Hon. W. B. ROSS: One matter has been cleared up. I understand that there are men who, under the existing law, would be entitled to retire on thirty-five-fiftieths or seven-tenths of their salaries. Some of them are afraid that under this Act they might be retired on fifteen-sixtieths; but their fears should be dispelled by the assurance of the leader of the House that that is not so, and that anyone who has a vested right to retire on seven-tenths of his salary is protected, and that even if there is something wrong in the construction of the Act it will be made good. As I understand the Bill will automatically cease on July 1, 1921, it may be as well to let it go. So, with the explanation I have made, I will be satisfied to let the Bill pass as it is.

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK: I listened with a good deal of interest to the remarks of the Minister of Labour (Hon. Mr. Robertson); and, while I quite agree with what he said, I would point out that he did not at all touch the point which I raised. I do not quite see why the Government should not agree to accept this amendment, as I do not think it would jeopardize the Bill