

Government Annuities Act

have taken part in the discussion of the resolution are members of the industrial relations committee I would think they would find it more convenient and more interesting to place their questions before the officials who will appear before the industrial relations committee, and have them discuss them in a more thorough way. Of course we would like this reference to the committee to take place as quickly as possible, and to leave all possible latitude to the committee to inquire into the administration of the Government Annuities Act and the nature and purport of the amendments which are being offered to the bill.

I was pleased to hear the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, in his opening remarks on November 15, state that each of the changes proposed in the Government Annuities Act is acceptable and desirable. Other hon. members who took part in the debate held the same view. Far from objection, there is entire approval of each of the amendments which are brought to the attention of this house.

My hon. friend who just invited me to make a statement at this stage spent most of his time the other day on two matters which I suggest are not relevant to the discussion on second reading, namely mortality tables and interest rates, since these two matters are under the direct and exclusive authority of the governor in council. I do not think there was any other point raised by my hon. friend in the last debate on this matter.

As to the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mrs. Fairclough), I understand—I had occasion to have this confirmed later—that she is agreeable to letting these questions stand until the bill has reached the committee stage. With this I conclude, Mr. Speaker, inviting hon. members to restrain their remarks so this bill can be referred to the standing committee on industrial relations as quickly as possible in order that the amendments can be voted on and approved at this session.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cote) is quite correct in stating that at an earlier stage in this debate I indicated that each of the changes forecast in this legislation is acceptable and desirable. He knows, too, that I approve the suggestion that this bill be referred to and studied by a committee of this house. Although I do approve that suggestion, frankly I wonder when another committee is going to find time to meet during the course of this session, and how it is going to be possible for the officials of this house to provide the necessary staff for another committee. Hon. members

are aware of the fact that so many committees are meeting now they are competing with each other for time and assistance. However, I do hope it may be possible for us to deal with this bill in committee before the session ends.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): This was a request by the opposition, you know.

Mr. Knowles: Does the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Fournier) happen to remember when the opposition requested that?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I could not give the exact date, but my information is that the opposition desired to have a serious study of this bill in committee, and we agreed.

Mr. Knowles: I just wondered whether the minister remembered that that request was made in June of 1948.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): No, it was requested at this session.

Mr. Knowles: Of course the request was probably renewed this session.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): We never forget a request from the opposition.

Mr. Knowles: It is good that the Minister of Public Works is in such a genial mood. He realizes that what he is doing is inviting us to make more requests, although we may have to wait three or four years—

Mr. Fournier (Hull): You can make them easily, without invitation.

Mr. Knowles: That is right, and we are both persistent and patient. The parliamentary assistant has also indicated that most, if not all, of those of us who took part in the debate during the resolution stage are members of the industrial relations committee to which this bill will be referred, so we shall have an opportunity in that committee to discuss the various questions that were raised when the debate was in progress on Thursday of last week. Nevertheless I do feel that before the house is asked to give second reading, which involves giving approval to the principle of the bill, we should have had a more complete statement answering some of the questions that were put to the government at the resolution stage. I want to make it quite clear that in saying this I am not offering any criticism whatever of the hon. member for Verdun-La Salle (Mr. Cote). After all, a parliamentary assistant is placed in a difficult position. He may have all the information, but he cannot really speak for the government. I do feel that this bill should have been brought on at a time when the minister could have made a statement answering some of the questions that were put to