

*Judges Act*

Government will give serious consideration to that recommendation at the earliest possible date.

[*Translation*]

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my remarks by commending fellow Members on all sides of the House for recognizing the importance of supporting this Bill and improving it if necessary.

● (1030)

[*English*]

I also share my colleague's view that we have a very good judiciary in Canada. However, reform is fundamental in Liberal principle. Anything, no matter how good, can be improved. Let us try to improve our judiciary. This Bill is a step in that direction.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment briefly on the Bill before the House, Bill C-88, and follow up on the point made by the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston), that we should try to improve the situation, especially with respect to pensions.

I support this Bill because I believe it not only embodies recommendations made by a commission of inquiry—the Guthrie Commission which made recommendations with respect to the salaries of judges—but also deals with the important point of pensions and the right of the surviving spouse to continue to receive the pension of the deceased spouse upon remarriage.

Mr. Speaker, this provision is of particular interest to me because it affects about 200,000 federal public servants. It affects the military, the RCMP and probably all Crown Corporations, where the existing legislation provides that the spouse of a deceased pensioner loses, I repeat *loses*, any rights to pension benefits if that person remarries.

Bill C-88 is being used to create a precedent, to me a very important precedent, and I am referring to the provisions contained in Clause 2,

[*English*]

We support Clause 2 of Bill C-88 which provides for the continuation of survivor's pension to a widow or widower of a judge even after the widow or widower remarries. We see this provision as a humane step, a step forward. It is a small step which should apply to all public servants, be they federally employed under the Public Service Employment Act, employees under the RCMP Act, Armed Forces personnel or Crown corporation employees.

There are hundreds of thousands of people whose pension entitlements are cut because they have remarried. I believe that every Member of the House would want to see the Government, when it brings forward the pension reform we have been promised, give consideration to a proposal that

would allow Canadian public servants in the categories I have just enumerated to have the same privileges as the judges.

I accept this Bill as being a good first step. I say to Government Members that we will look very closely for action on this front. I believe Members of the House would care enough to give the Government full control over this issue at this time so that we will see in forthcoming months provisions dealing with Public Service pensions.

I know that many members of my caucus would like to make a few comments on this question because it is a very important first step. I rest my case on the fact that it is a just measure. It is equitable and something that I will support. I hope the Government acts on it.

**Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words on Bill C-88, a Bill that is long overdue. A review of judges' salaries was done by an independent committee which compared judges' salaries with the incomes of those who are in the legal business today. In all fairness, we cannot expect to get good judges out of the legal system if indeed they will be paid far less than they can make in their regular occupations.

The position of a judge should not be one of status. It must be one of solid judgment. A person sitting on the bench must be fair minded, objective and dedicated if the people of Canada are to receive just and fair decisions.

Much has been said about judges over the years. A number of judges in Canada had political careers before being appointed to the bench. Many people in the legal profession across Canada have participated actively in one form or another in politics for several years before being appointed to the bench. Many people have participated actively in their communities before being appointed to the bench. Those activities in the early years of a judge's life are what determine whether or not a person will make a good judge.

Apart from politics, the moment a judge is appointed to the bench, we must understand that his or her whole life changes. Judges may no longer belong to groups or organizations in their communities. They can no longer participate in any political activities and even membership in fraternal organizations comes into question. A judge must be seen to be and must indeed be purer than the pure. As I said, a judge must be objective and honest.

If we are to ask all this of our judges, we must be fair to them. They cannot lobby for themselves because they cannot participate in politics. The only way we will have fair minded people on the bench is by providing that they will not lose income and that they will have a stable future. It is indeed a very important career and must be recognized as such.

A part of this Bill which has already been mentioned by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) is the clause dealing with pensions going to the surviving spouse. We support this clause in principle. Before this Bill, if the spouse