

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

● (5:00 p.m.)

I was glad to hear the minister say that, although the particular groups that the government had in mind when it sought this change were the groups of civilian employees who were dismissed from certain bases in Manitoba on April 30, nevertheless it is so worded that it will cover anyone in the public service who was on strength on April 30. The minister must be aware that there are a number of individuals who, when they saw this legislation coming many months ago, began to make their plans accordingly. I know of a number of who, on the strength of the minister's announcement on April 7, arranged to make their retirement on April 30, and they will be glad when this amendment has been carried and the legislation put through all its stages so they can get the benefit of the early retirement set out in this bill.

When we were debating clause 27 some weeks ago the minister dealt with a number of subjects that had been raised. We had a vote on a matter on which we did not see eye to eye and we lost the vote. Nevertheless, there was one aspect of the whole matter concerning which the minister was kind enough to say my arguments had impressed him. That admission from him is to be found on page 4748 of *Hansard*, where he said:

I cannot help but be moved by the eloquent plea of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

One has to watch out when something like that is said, but the plea I made on that occasion had to do with the escalation of the pensions of members of the armed forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police who retire before the age of 60. I am going to be as brief as I can and I am not going to rehash the whole debate on Bill C-194 of last session. The fact is that the major argument that the government used on that occasion for not permitting the escalation of the pensions of these two groups who took their pensions prior to age 60 was that 60 was the earliest age at which a public servant could have his pension escalated. There are a few exceptions to that, such as persons on pension because of ill health; but the general rule was that public servants could not and would not get their pensions escalated until they reached age 60, and that therefore RCMP and armed forces personnel must not ask for their pensions to be escalated prior to age 60.

Now, however, Mr. Chairman, under the terms of this bill, Bill C-207, we are providing that certain public servants who retire before the age of 60 can get their pensions escalated annually starting right away. We make this provision by a combination of clauses in Bill C-207, in Bill C-194 of last session and the Public Service Superannuation Act. Therefore, I contend that if by breaking this barrier we have now decided it is possible for public servants who retire before age 60 to enjoy the benefit of having their pensions escalated right away, there is no longer any moral ground for denying the same right to retired members of the armed forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I made this argument at some length when we debated this matter on March 30 and the minister, as I have already said, was kind enough not only to listen to my

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

argument but to say that he was impressed by it. He ended his statement with these words:

It would be my hope that any imbalance that the passage of these amendments might bring about the relationship of pensioners in the public service and the two forces could be rectified.

The two forces referred to by the minister are, of course, the armed forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

My purpose in rising at this moment, since we are back on clause 27, is to ask the minister whether, since his commitment on March 30, he has come up with any formula to redress this imbalance. One of the things the minister said to me on March 30 was that that legislation was not before us at the present time. I would draw to his attention the fact that in the present bill, on page 17 of schedule B, we are in fact correcting something that was done in last year's Bill C-194. We have corrected an oversight which had to do with certain Members of Parliament who hold positions as parliamentary secretaries, second deputy speakers or what-have-you.

My point is that in Bill C-207 we are correcting an oversight in last year's Bill C-194. It is precisely that same Bill C-194 that denied these escalations of pensions to members of the armed forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Therefore, I suggest that a parallel correction be made in the schedule of this bill. The legislation is before us; the matter is in front of us right now. Since, as I say, the government has broken the 60 year age barrier and made provision that some public servants who retire early under the provisions of this bill will enjoy an escalation of their pensions beginning right away, I contend the same should be done for members of the armed forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In light of the commitment that the President of the Treasury Board gave me on March 30 that it was his hope that any imbalance could be rectified, can he now say whether he is in a position to do this job of rectification today?

**Mr. Drury:** Mr. Chairman, since the hon. gentleman quoted my remarks when we last discussed this bill, may I point out that I said that I was moved rather than impressed by his point. I make a subtle distinction between these two words. I would prefer the term "moved" to "impressed", in that while I can accept the logic of his point I am not entirely sure of the premise on which it is based. At the moment, the ministers concerned, namely the Solicitor General and the Minister of National Defence, are looking at the question of whether in fact an imbalance will be created as the hon. gentleman suggests, or whether there is some other explanation and, if so, what is the best way of proceeding to correct the imbalance. I am told that answers to these questions will not be available for some time.

● (5:10 p.m.)

As the hon. gentleman knows, some of the most complicated pieces of legislation on the statute books are legislative enactments relating to superannuation and pensions. Unfortunately, we have relatively few experts in the government service, even though they are