

Government Orders

I think that we have been fortunate in Canada to have had probably one of the best public services in the world and we should all be very proud of that.

It is a shame that the merit system is going to be pushed aside and that managers will have the right to appoint whomever they wish to appoint. This concerns a great number of people in this area and it is a very regressive step.

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I must say I am a little calmer after the motion of the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader to have the question put which in effect lets us continue to debate until time runs out at 10 p.m. but no motions can be made, even at third reading.

• (1740)

I just want to dwell on that very briefly because now it is done, and I compliment him in a back-handed way because he certainly cut me off at the pass. I certainly intended to move a motion that I think would have been acceptable to the Chair.

I had some assistance with the motion to recommit Bill C-55 to the committee and reconstitute the committee for many of the same reasons that members who have already spoken on the bill have mentioned.

One of the reasons is this very question of indexation of pensions. Bill C-55, 159 pages with schedules, is in effect the bible for federal public servants, RCMP officers, and people in the military. It makes for a very dry and pedantic discussion here in the House of Commons, but it affects the monthly cheque that goes out to thousands and thousands of Canadians.

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader came into this House with a suspicion that some of us were going to move an amendment, and he asked me if I was going to move an amendment, and within two minutes he caught the eye of the Speaker. After a nice little address for three minutes he put his motion, which procedurally cuts off any possibility of moving an amendment, a reasoned amendment or a recommittal to a committee, which was what I was going to do. It should be done for the reasons mentioned here already by members who know more about the bill than I.

In terms of cutting off debate on third reading he said that the debate was proceeding nicely. Yes, there was a legislative committee that worked on it for a few days. It just came from the legislative committee last week and last Friday afternoon Bill C-55 came onto the floor.

We are under extended hours and on Friday afternoon, after private members' hour at 3 p.m., the debate started to peter out. Questions were put on a lot of the motions at report stage. On Monday of this week we voted. We were going to vote for many hours, and we did vote on many amendments. I think there were 37.

On something so complicated as a pension bill affecting all federal public servants, military and the police, to debate it in this House, after committee, on Friday and Monday, with the votes on Monday night, have third reading today, and then after four speakers move to put the question is really unfortunate.

In effect it means the guillotine is going to drop at 10 p.m.

I said earlier that I have been surprised at how many letters I have received from concerned public servants. The public servant has not been worried about the members' pensions, it is the public that wonders about the members' pensions.

This great institution, the House of Commons, could not even get five members last Friday to stand to force a vote on several reasonable amendments on members' pensions, whether vested too soon or double-dipping.

We can argue about vesting too soon, but there is not any plausible explanation and excuse for the double-dipping that we all know about. I am not going to mention names but I could mention many people who have sat in this House with distinction.

Let us leave the House. My amendment and the amendments from the hon. members for Don Valley East and Edmonton Southeast just affected members of Parliament, not the whole Public Service.

Let us leave the House of Commons, this odious place where everyone thinks we are the bad boys, and let us examine the next ex-president of the Privy Council who is evidently going to become the president of Canadian National. We all know roughly what the president of Canadian National gets, \$200,000 or \$300,000-plus dollars.