

State Pensions

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Because of the gold-digger clause. The marriage took place before retirement. Had the marriage taken place after retirement there would be no survivor entitlement. That is what might be called the ultimate anti-gold-digger clause. The other one is unfair. If the parties, regardless of the age difference, have been married for ten or 15 years and at the time of death they were cohabiting together, living as man and wife, the widow should receive the full entitlement of the pension.

I have also had drawn to my attention something that I trust will be caught here by reason of a combination of the Income Tax Act and the Superannuation Act.

At the time of the tax reform in 1971 the then minister of finance indicated that through tax treaties there would be an elimination of any advantage then existing whereby a public servant retiring to another country for reasons of health or domestic felicity would not have any tax withheld. Because of the tax treaty in existence there was no withholding tax of 25 per cent. Mr. Benson indicated that this would be wiped out. I remember him telling me that any public servant who had worked for Canada, retires, receives a pension and lives in the Virgin Islands or the Bahamas will have 25 per cent deducted from his pension. That was it. That is under way at the present time.

I want to find out from the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) whether that philosophy is still applicable. Will a public servant of Canada, or a member of the armed services or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who is living offshore be immediately penalized by having 25 per cent of his superannuation held back regardless of the amount of tax that he is paying in the country of residence? That 25 per cent would certainly not be refunded to him even if he paid a further 25 per cent in the country of residence. He would be paying 50 per cent of his pension for income tax. That was not only a foolish, but a prejudicial and improper proposal by the government with regard to former public servants.

There are many other details in this bill. One could go through them almost like prayer beads because they are very detailed. However, the explanations will come about in committee. As the parliamentary secretary and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said, the appropriate agreements can be reached so that this bill will go to a staff relations oriented committee where the necessary studies can be made and then have the bill referred back to this House and passed during this session of this parliament.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as has been pointed out, this is a bill of 89 pages and 106 clauses. Therefore we are hardly going to deal with it in detail at this second reading stage.

I am glad that the earlier commitment to let this bill go to the special joint committee that is dealing with public service matters is going to be honoured. That committee has held many sittings. It is seized of problems in the public service. I think that it is the proper body to deal with this legislation, much of which does relate to public servants.

● (2130)

In introducing the bill the parliamentary secretary pointed out that in some respects it is a housekeeping bill, a bill which includes many technical changes, the purpose of which is to correct anomalies that inevitably occur in the various pieces of pension legislation on our statute books. Although I shall have some critical things to say when I point out certain anomalies that have not been corrected, and even though I shall object to some of the things that are being done in the bill, I say that, on the whole, a good job has been done in making progress in our superannuation legislation, having regard to the various pensions that come under the aegis of the federal government.

I think it is appropriate that in this year that has been identified so often as International Women's Year special emphasis is being put on establishing equality of status between men and women. I am glad that the bill not only asserts that in fine rhetoric but also carries the principle forward in certain precise situations. I shall come in a moment to one or two instances in which equality has not yet been established as between men and women, but I suppose it is still a cardinal rule around this place that if we make progress at all, even though it be slow, this is something to be welcomed.

I am glad that the parliamentary secretary was able to report on the extensive consultations that have taken place with those who represent public servants, and that to a large extent the provisions in this bill have their support even if the bill does not carry out all of their wishes.

It may be just pointing to a small detail or two, but while I am noting what is good in the bill I welcome the fact that we are at the end of non-contributory pensions for judges and also that we are at the end of non-contributory pensions for retired prime ministers. As hon. members are aware, the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) as a member of parliament contributes to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, but up until the present time he has made no contribution to the extra pension that he will get for being a retired prime minister.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): And I do not think he should either.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend from Edmonton West says that he does not think he should.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Not the Prime Minister.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I think that if a judge is expected to make a contribution to the generous pension that he gets, then the Prime Minister should do the same, and I am glad this requirement is in this bill. As a matter of fact, as the hon. member for Edmonton West knows, when the parliamentary secretary was speaking—or perhaps it was when the hon. member was speaking, I forget which—I made one of those suggestions that did not get on the record. Sometimes I think that what we should have in this place, at least for a day, is not a record of what is heard by the *Hansard* reporters but a record of what is said and not heard. At any rate, there was some suggestion