

*Pension Act*

would not constitute any injustice, which it was inferred by the minister had been caused the pension commissioners in the past. The bill could be introduced and the matter submitted to the scrutiny of parliament, as it always has been in the past, and as it is in connection with judges' salaries. I think there is no question that that procedure we have used in the past should be followed in the future.

In considering veterans legislation, both in the House of Commons and in the committee on veterans affairs, the primary test applied has been this: Will it benefit the veterans? If we applied that test to this piece of legislation I do not think one member on the government side of the house would get up and say that this change will benefit the veterans. There is no benefit to the veterans involved in this matter at all; and there is a very great danger of the opposite effect. In other words, there is danger of the veteran having to suffer as a result of this legislation, because of a loss of independence on the part of the commission.

As evidenced by the brief submitted by the Legion, from which the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra read, a large number of veterans in this country believe that a change in the method of setting the salaries of the commissioners is going to or might affect their interests. They will have less confidence in the pension commission if this goes through than they have had heretofore.

As has been pointed out by the hon. member for Greenwood no one on this side of the house has attacked the pension commission. No one on this side of the house has attacked its integrity, nor has anyone any ideas along that line. I do not know why the Minister of Veterans Affairs has introduced into this discussion something which has been described by the hon. member for Greenwood as a red herring. The matter of the integrity of the pension commission is not involved here at all. One of the chief reasons why we on this side of the house have been so insistent upon preventing the passage of this provision has been to protect the integrity of the pension commission, and to safeguard the high esteem in which they have been held by the veterans in this country, in the hope that it may continue into the future.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs referred to the method of appointment. I would ask him this question: Essentially, what difference is there between the method of appointment of members of the pension commission and the method of appointment of judges? They are both appointed by the government in power

at the time. But certainly the Minister of Justice is not suggesting—and I hope he will not suggest—that the salaries of judges should be set by order in council. The only difference between the appointment of members of the pension commission and those of the judiciary is that in the one case the appointment is for ten years, or such lesser term as is provided, while in the other case—

**An hon. Member:** There is a big difference.

**Mr. Harkness:**—the appointment is made during good behaviour. They are both appointed, of course, during good behaviour.

**An hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. Harkness:** In the case of judges there can be a removal from office by an address; in the case of members of the pension commission, they can be removed by the governor in council, for cause, only. That is the only difference. But that argument, that there is a slight difference in the method of appointment, really has no bearing on the question we are considering, that of whether salaries should be set by parliament, as they have been up to this date, or whether we should turn that over as a prerogative of the government.

I would certainly hope that the government would reconsider this matter and allow the situation to remain in the satisfactory condition in which it has been ever since the pension commission has been in operation.

**Mr. Noseworthy:** Mr. Chairman, the only reason the minister gave, so far as I could discover, was that he did not want parliament to delay any request the government might make for increasing the salaries of the commissioners. He asked the question how we would like our indemnities to be held up for two years. I think the minister should tell us when the House of Commons held up an increase in commissioners' salaries for two years, when that request had been made by the government. If there is any such case on record, then the minister should give us the actual date of that request.

**Mr. Lapointe:** That is not the statement I made.

**Mr. Noseworthy:** The integrity of the commissioners is not questioned. What will happen is that this legislation will give the government and the minister just a little more control, a little more power over that commission. No matter how the commission acts or what decision it may make, veterans across this country will suspect that the commission is under the thumb of the governor