

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 17, 1952

The house met at eleven o'clock.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

PROPOSAL FOR LONG SERVICE PENSION PLAN FOR MEMBERS

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take the rather unusual course of giving notice orally of a motion I propose to have placed on the order paper in my name. The motion reads as follows:

That the subject of a pension plan for members of parliament after long service based on contributions by all members be referred to the standing committee on banking and commerce.

From time to time over the last few years the question of making some contributory pension provision for members of parliament has been discussed among members of all parties. It was felt that a pension plan would be in the public interest if it removed, to some degree, the feeling that a long period of service in the House of Commons necessarily prevents many members from making adequate provision for their later years, particularly as there have been conspicuous cases of former members left in a position of great hardship.

A plan suggested by a group of private members is that contributions would be made by all members on the same scale as those required under the Civil Service Superannuation Act. The benefits in this case would be at rates and subject to conditions designed to make and keep the pension plan actuarially sound.

I was approached by a number of members and asked whether the government would be prepared to sponsor such a pension plan. My attitude was that, in a matter which concerned all political parties and the position of parliament generally, I would not be prepared to ask my colleagues to take any initiative unless I was in a position to say that the leaders of all parties opposite felt that the establishment of a long service pension plan was something which was not merely in the present interest of members of parliament themselves, but was also in the public interest, because it would help to make it possible to attract well qualified men and women to parliament, and particularly to encourage those with experience in parliament to remain in public life.

I have consulted the leader of the opposition and the leaders of the C.C.F. group and the Social Credit group and I am authorized by each one of them to state that he considers such a pension plan would be a contribution to the strengthening of our parliamentary institutions.

Since the matter is of equal interest to members of all parties, the government felt that rather than bring in a bill with specific terms it would be preferable to ask the banking and commerce committee to consider the subject matter and to make such recommendations for legislation as commended themselves to the committee after a study of the pension plans already in existence in a number of commonwealth countries and the United States and the plan under discussion by a number of members of this house.

Of course, any bill would have to be preceded by a resolution and the necessary constitutional recommendation to the house from the Governor General; but I can say now that a proposal reasonable in itself and which all parties felt was genuinely in the public interest would not be apt to encounter objections from the government.

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): Would this apply to the Senate as well as the House of Commons?

Mr. St. Laurent: The government is not recommending any specific plan; it is referring the matter to the banking and commerce committee of the House of Commons.

APPROVAL OF REPORT OF CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION RESPECTING CERTAIN EMPLOYEES

Hon. F. G. Bradley (Secretary of State) moved:

That the report of the civil service commission respecting certain employees of the House of Commons tabled on June 11, 1952, be approved.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE BILLS

FIRST READINGS—SENATE BILLS

Bill No. 338, for the relief of Marie Jacqueline Michelle Major Valiquette.—Mr. Winkler.

Bill No. 339, for the relief of May Clara Taylor Di Biasio.—Mr. Winkler.

Bill No. 340, for the relief of Regina Joan Lee Mills.—Mr. Winkler.

Bill No. 341, for the relief of Violette Chartrand Fairon.—Mr. Winkler.