

*Statute Law Amendment Act, 1970*

the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Dubé). This will be found in the February 9 issue of *Hansard* at pages 3358 and 3359. I also took up the matter in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. The Minister of Veterans Affairs was good enough to write to me saying that he still felt very sympathetic toward my position but he saw a number of difficulties and he felt that the government would not be able to deal with this matter now. He continued:

As you are aware, the Prime Minister, on June 17, 1969, advised the House that the whole fabric of federal social legislation was under review. As war veterans allowance is a social measure, it is included in this study. As this review is continuing I am unable, at this time, to indicate what changes, if any, may occur in the War Veterans Allowance Act. Your suggestion will be kept in mind when changes in the act are contemplated.

I suppose I should be encouraged by that, Mr. Speaker, but I do not know when the War Veterans Allowance Act is going to be amended. In the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs we are dealing with the Woods report and the Pension Act, but not with the War Veterans Allowance Act. It is obvious that nothing will be done about it until after we get the white paper on social security. In the meantime, this widow in Swift Current and widows of retired civil servants across Canada who are also receiving the war veterans allowance will discover that the letter from the President of the Treasury Board was wrong when it said, "all will benefit."

I suppose that the President of the Treasury Board will claim that what he wrote is technically correct; they will get a slightly larger cheque as far as superannuation is concerned but the war veterans allowance cheque will be reduced by the same amount, so these people will not benefit, despite his statement that all would do so.

In the main, Mr. Speaker, as far as the civil servants side of it is concerned, this bill is good. It is better than we recommended on May 6, 1967, from our special joint committee. It covers not only the immediate problem but the problem on a long run basis. I give all kinds of praise to that part of this legislation that provides for these pension increases for retired civil servants, but why not finish the job? Why leave in it this serious flaw which hits again at war veterans allowance recipients and the widows who come under the War Veterans Allowance Act. You can tell me if you will that it is going to be considered later on but I know the parliamentary processes better than that. You get something

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

like this when the matter is before the House you get something like this when you are in a bargaining position, you do not get it later on. When letters start to come from other widows like this one, and from veterans across the country, I hope the government will provide us with an appropriate reply explaining why the clear statement of the President of the Treasury Board is not being kept.

That is the main thing wrong with this legislation, Mr. Speaker, but it does not detract from my general praise for it. However, there are one or two other things that I should mention about the civil service side of it. The first is the 2 per cent ceiling per year on the amount by which pensions can be escalated in the future. I recognize that this is tied to the Canada Pension Plan formula, and that that formula applies to old age security and the guaranteed income supplement but at some point we have to break that. It is not good enough to give pension increases of only 2 per cent per year when the cost of living increase is 4 or 5 per cent per year. I suggest that those who are clamouring for this formula to be geared directly to the increases in the cost of living have a point, have a case that the government ought to meet, and I press that case as strongly as I can.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I must move on. That is more or less what I wanted to say about the pension increase side of the bill, namely the part of the bill that raises the pensions of public servants now retired and provides for escalation of pensions in the future. With regard to the other part of the bill, that part which improves the pensions of Members of Parliament, I have let off steam among my friends for the last couple of days following Friday's debate and will therefore spare the House. I feel more strongly about the matter than I did on Friday and the more I think of it the more it seems to me that we will rue the day we brought down legislation that made it possible for a member who has served six years in Parliament to receive a pension of \$300 a month for life, no matter what his age may be.

You know, you can argue all you like about the difference between our job and other jobs, about our responsibilities and the monkish life some of us are said to live; but the fact of the matter is that this pension scheme does not fit with pension schemes that apply in general. A pension of \$500 a month for life