

Age of Retirement

into politics until he was 65 years of age. That is exactly the way it was. When I had the audacity to attempt to replace that venerable old gentleman who had served with such distinction, I was referred to as the boy politician even though I had crept over the age of 30 years.

● (1750)

Mr. Knowles: Now you are venerable yourself.

Mr. Dinsdale: Now I am venerable. However, there is a changing pressure. It will not be long. The baby boom has already gone through the system. That is why we are having so much discussion these days with regard to the demographic changes that are taking place. For example, by the end of the century 15 per cent of our population will be over 65 years of age, a substantial percentage. No wonder this debate has been precipitated here today. Pressure has come because of deliberations in the other place and because of recent legislative action on the part of the Congress of the United States.

I want to speak specifically to the bill and talk about the situation that exists at present under the Public Service Superannuation Act because, as was indicated, this is really what we are discussing today. It is possible for the mandatory age of 65 to be extended. This extension is at the discretion of the manager of the particular department under whom the employee is serving. That usually refers to the manager of the branch or the deputy minister. Usually the decision to extend the age of useful service of 65 depends upon the demand for the service or talents of the particular employee.

It is to be noted that this is only extended in cases where the maximum salary authorized to be paid as an SX-1 has not already been reached. This decision is, of course, in the hands of Treasury Board. It is not an absolute prohibition at the moment, but it almost amounts to that because in practice very few departments have used the flexibility that is permissible under the present superannuation act.

It should be noted that one of the reasons for this fair amount of rigidity in the exercise of the act is because of the problems that have already been pointed out by previous speakers, particularly the hon. lady who just spoke. The whole proposition of mandatory retirement at 65 came about when comparatively few people lived to be 65. At the time of Bismarck, or even earlier, the average longevity would be in the forties rather than the sixties. There were not too many people who lived long enough to draw a pension.

The superannuation act is quite specific with regard to the privileges and the benefits that are available to those people, even though they might be extended beyond age 65. For example, they are allowed full participation in the Public Service Superannuation plan. They enjoy the supplementary death benefit plan, the group surgical-medical insurance plan, and the life insurance features of the public service management insurance plan. However, as is common with almost all Canadian employers, coverage under the disability insurance plan or the public service management insurance plan and long term disability plan is not available to anyone over age 65.

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

If you contemplate removing any mandatory restriction, you have to make major changes in the social security plans applying to government employees. It should be noted, by way of observation, that it is possible for a person to be hired beyond age 65 under the existing legislation where special talents and qualifications are involved.

Everyone realizes further extensions and flexibility will have to be introduced. This matter has already been taken under consideration by the new Government of Canada. As a result of the pressure that has been outlined here, the Treasury Board secretariat, on behalf of the government as employer, is now reviewing public service policy with respect not only to the question of mandatory retirement age, but also greater flexibility in retirement ages with a view to determining whether policies might be reversed.

There is a series of other studies that are already under way which relate to this important matter. This includes the Conference Board in Canada survey of Canadian employers' views on mandatory retirement age, and the Finance, Health and Welfare study of retirement income policy for Canadians.

At this stage we are all concerned about the problem, and we are all interested in bringing public policy into line with the demands of the demographic changes that are under way. I am sure that as soon as the results of all these studies and this discussion are known, the government will take the necessary action to bring public policy in line with the actual social circumstances existing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to say a few words in this debate. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is the dean of this House, not in continuous service however, because it is the previous speaker, the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), who is the dean of this House when it comes to continuous service, having been here since 1951.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Darling: However, I believe the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has the longest service having come to this House in, I believe, 1942. He took a brief holiday from 1958 to 1962. I had the impression he came here before the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, and that cost me a dollar because I said the hon. member was here first. I too can be classed as a senior citizen. I am one of the few members in this House of Commons who is entitled to extra indemnity because of my age. I might say the taxman gets a good bit of it back.

I commend the hon. member for Grey-Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) on bringing this bill before the House because it certainly is worth while and deserves serious consideration. As was pointed out by a previous speaker, there are a great many men and women who have attained the age of 65 who continue to work in a very worth-while fashion. In fact they probably do better than some of those many years younger. I do not believe the chronological age is all that important. I myself have worked