

*Pension Act*

to have any more publicity than is necessary in connection with it. It wants to be in a position to raise these salaries after members who are attending this session go to their homes. At that time there can be no discussion about it, until the house meets again in the fall, or after the new year. In fact, there could be no discussion until we got down to a consideration of veterans affairs estimates a year from now. Then we would be faced with an accomplished fact, and there would be no possible chance of making any change at that time. There would be no use talking about it then. The salaries would have been raised; parliament would have been by-passed.

That, I submit to you, is the reason why the cabinet is making the change proposed here in the bill. And let me close with these words, that this change is not of the slightest benefit to the veterans of Canada. This is a provision written into the Pension Act, not for the benefit of even one veteran in this country, but for the benefit of the government and of the members of the pension commission. This change will shake the confidence of the veterans of Canada in the pension commission; there can be no other result. Furthermore, it strikes at the independence of the pension commission. There would be no more justification for the Minister of Justice to come into this House of Commons with a provision whereby judges' salaries would be set by order in council than there is for this provision concerning members of the pension commission.

**Mr. Knowles:** Do not suggest that.

**Mr. Harkness:** That will be the next move.

**Mr. Green:** Well, the Minister of Justice may be pretty dumb, but he is not that dumb.

**Mr. Abbott:** I can think of others who are just as dumb; can't you?

**Mr. Bennett:** You should be a pretty good judge.

**Mr. Green:** I do not include the Minister of Veterans Affairs in that statement.

**Mr. Abbott:** Speak for yourself, John.

**Mr. Green:** Finally, this change is taking power away from the Canadian parliament; and, as such, it is entirely wrong. I hope the Prime Minister and other members of the cabinet will just take another look at this section before they force it through the house. If they are not interested in the submission made by me, or any other member on the opposition side of the house, then let them consider the veterans of Canada. And if they do that, they will not force this present change through.

**Mr. Gillis:** Mr. Chairman, it is rather unfortunate that the veterans affairs committee had to return to the house with a controversy of this kind on its hands; because, otherwise, the committee got along very well. It brought about a good number of changes in the proposed legislation. It is bad near the end of a session to bring in a sore spot like this. The hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra has served one very useful purpose: If you happen to be with him in opposition he makes his case pretty thoroughly; and it saves time for whoever comes behind him in the debate.

Now, I agree with him. We agreed in committee, and it is unfortunate we have to repeat it in the house. I agree that if the principle of parliament setting the salaries of the commission was correct from 1919 to 1954, there was not anything I could see that should have changed it.

The second point we have to consider is that there is a principle at stake here, and that is the right of members of parliament to vote money. That principle is at stake; and it is not a good thing for members of parliament to get away from that principle.

The next thing I see that is bad in the proposal is that it interferes with the independence of the commission. That commission was always looked upon as an agency which would operate between the government and the veterans, with the veterans affairs committee acting as a kind of referee. But if the cabinet now appoints the members of the commission—well, in my judgment the most trouble the commission has had in the past has been with treasury board. And if we now grant the right to at least some members of treasury board to fix the salaries of the commission, in addition to making the appointments, then in my opinion it will have the effect of making the members of that commission subservient, at least to some extent, to members of treasury board. It creates a very bad psychological effect. This complex is created, whether we like it or not: "I am working for the cabinet; they appoint me; they fix my salary; they pay me, so I had better be a good boy." There can be no doubt about that, and I think it is a very bad principle. Even at this late date this should be reconsidered.

Now, I know there is a very important debate to come up soon on an important section of our economy. I do not want to belabour this matter. We are all on record in committee. On the two points I have set out, I completely disagree with the proposal as it stands at the present time. It is bad legislation. It can set a precedent: The Minister of Justice can come in and ask for