

Yes, I have doubts about that situation. Now I see that I may eventually have some success here in the Senate. I have listened to Senators Corbin, Simard and Forrestall. Since I arrived here I have been asking for an open discussion on all the questions of double dipping — not the double dipping of the members of Parliament or the pension plan of the members of Parliament, while this immense bureaucracy hides behind us and says, “Look at those people.” The entire question of pension plans should be looked into. What a good area of study for a committee of senators!

• (1500)

I am very taken by this because one senator who did not know anyone in Ottawa and who lives far from here fell ill, and I was available to take him to the military hospital. Again, we have the demagogy. I hope that someday *The Hill Times* will write about that because everybody should know about it.

We eliminated all the VIPs who were hiding behind members of the House of Commons and the Senate. Members of both Houses who come from across Canada do not have a medical doctor in Ottawa. However, the privilege was abused. You would know the importance of a bureaucrat or his wife or children by whether or not he was allowed to go to the military hospital.

It reminds me of the War Measures Act. You were known to be important if your spouse could have a young military escort while shopping at Loblaws. People who had never shopped at Loblaws before started shopping there with their escorts to show they were more important than their neighbour in Rockcliffe. That was in 1970. You were important if you had military protection; you were not if you had none. Imagine the big talk on the cocktail circuit in Ottawa.

Members of the House of Commons and senators are being deprived of a service they should expect. If you defend that view, who will be on your side? One should be able to defend a good cause. If it is indefensible, of course one should stay quiet.

As I look around this chamber, I can name all of those senators who live in Manitoba, British Columbia and other regions of Canada outside Ottawa. When they become ill, they are immediately taken to the military hospital. That same treatment was extended to top-level civil servants. That medical program then became a VIP program and was extended to encompass more and more people. Honourable senators, the reason it is being eliminated is because it became too big and too expensive to provide.

We have never talked openly about this situation, but the time has come to do so. Senator Graham always listens to what I say. I should like him to know that I share the opinion of Senator De Bané. Senator De Bané, who is a better informed person than I, having been a minister of the Crown, understands the implications of this measure, and he asked very pertinent questions of Mr. Eggleton when he appeared before our committee. I urge honourable senators to read those interventions.

I should like to draw the attention of honourable senators to another matter. It has to do with pensions. At times I feel that

those who are most interested in pensions are those who live in a common-law relationship. I will explain.

I am concerned about widows who will, more and more, serve in the House of Commons and Senate. My concern does extend, however, to bachelors, like myself, and divorced people. I am appalled at what goes on in the lives of those who enter into common-law relationships.

Let us take the example of a member of Parliament who has been married for 25 years. In the old days, a good wife would support her husband and rejoice the first night her husband was elected as a member of the House of Commons. They faced the prospect of a sharing a new life together. Who created that member of the House of Commons? It was the so-called “good wife” at home with the children who could combine family life and at the same time be involved in the political life of her husband.

Let us look at what can happen in a situation such as that. The husband, after becoming a member of Parliament, may spend 10 years in the House of Commons. During that career, he may leave his wife and enter into a common-law relationship. I want honourable senators to consider what will happen to his pension in those circumstances. What happens, in fact, is that the woman with whom he has entered into that common-law relationship will be entitled to one-half to three-quarters, or even more, of his pension.

There is now talk in the House of Commons of including those involved in same-sex relationships being entitled to all the pension benefits that accrue to those who have shared traditional relationships. That question will be raised all across the land.

I remember one night in the House of Commons being called to vote at around eleven o'clock in the evening on amendments to the pension plan for veterans. I was a young member then. I thought it was not fair. I am talking about politicians being aware of the human side of an issue. Who built his career around his family life? Who gets drunk on the proceeds from the pension plan? The veteran who risked his life for his country is entitled to an adequate pension.

I remember having discussions with Marcel Lambert at night over long dinners. I remember an exchange between him and Bégin. It was not the best exchange, so I dare not to repeat it here. She objected, and he called her “une cocotte.”

Honourable senators I ask you: Is it fair that a woman need only be involved in a common-law relationship with a veteran for one year in order to be entitled to be receive his pension? The lady who waited, cried and agonized during the war for 10, 20 or 30 years finds herself at the end of his career eliminated from a pension by the new spouse.

My father told me about the greatest word in the English language when I learned English at university. That word is “fair.” He said, “Remember that word. It is an important word. When you talk to people, look them straight in the eyes and say, ‘Is it fair to treat people that way?’”