

*Members' Retiring Allowances*

**Mr. Argue:** Can the minister say whether the subject will be referred to the agriculture committee?

**Mr. Howe (Port Arthur):** That is a matter for the order paper.

**Mr. Argue:** There has been a tremendous drop in beef prices in recent days.

**Mrs. Fairclough:** May I ask a supplementary question? Will the minister say whether he expects to make a statement within a few days, since that was the inference in the news report.

**Mr. Gregg:** If any decision is reached on this matter I will most certainly convey it to the house.

**ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY****ALLEGED PRIVATE AGREEMENT BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND CANADA**

On the orders of the day:

**Hon. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition):** I wish to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister. Will he comment on the press report today that there was an undisclosed agreement not to press for the all-Canadian development of the seaway in consideration of the speedy advancement of the joint development of the hydroelectric power plants on the St. Lawrence?

**Right Hon. C. D. Howe (Acting Prime Minister):** I have not heard of the report referred to, but I can assure my hon. friend that there is no private agreement between Canada and the United States relating to the St. Lawrence project.

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE****INQUIRY AS TO POSSIBILITY OF INCREASES IN BENEFITS**

**Mrs. Ellen L. Fairclough (Hamilton West):** May I direct a question to the Minister of Labour? Can the minister now give me a reply to the question I asked him yesterday with reference to alleged consideration by the department of proposals for an increase in unemployment insurance benefits? I might say that this was announced in the *Hamilton Spectator* as a distinct possibility, and that an announcement would be made any day.

**Hon. Milton F. Gregg (Minister of Labour):** I think my hon. friend's question to some extent revolves around the definition in this chamber of the expression "give consideration to". She asked me yesterday whether the government was giving consideration to a plan for increasing unemployment insurance benefits, and I said that I was not able to reply to that. In reply to her question today I would say to her that my department is constantly studying the benefits given under unemployment insurance, and of course now with particular reference to the present situation; but I have not made any representations to the cabinet so far regarding changing these benefits.

**MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT****AMENDMENT TO PREVENT INCREASE IN MAXIMUM RETIRING ALLOWANCE**

**Right Hon. C. D. Howe (for the Prime Minister)** moved the third reading of Bill No. 176, to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act.

He said: During the debate on second reading the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Harkness) asked for an explanation of clause 2. I gave an explanation which perhaps is appropriate to the bill, but it was not appropriate to the question asked. I have now been given a statement which will perhaps give him the information he was then seeking.

Section 2 of this amending act relates to section 8 of the present act and is concerned with elections to contribute for prior service. Under the present act the basis of contributions for prior service was 6 per cent of the sessional indemnity in respect of that session. This will still apply in the case of sessions prior to the commencement of the pension plan, and it could have been applied to the last session of the last parliament where the same basis of payment prevailed, but with the introduction of the new method of paying indemnities to members, we could not, of course, use the same wording.

If you take the case of a member who is now contributing and assume that he is defeated at the next election, he would, if he were not eligible for an annual allowance, receive a withdrawal allowance in respect of the contributions which he made during this parliament. If he is elected to a subsequent parliament after receiving his withdrawal allowance, all that he needs to do is to elect to repay his withdrawal allowance to get credit for all his service during the present session. The same would be the case if this member had been a member at the last session of the last parliament, had he on being re-elected, after receiving a withdrawal allowance, desired to count that service.

The only way in which a member would not be contributing at the present session would be if he had already contributed \$4,000. In that case he would, on being defeated at