

Statute Law Amendment Act, 1970

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It being four o'clock, the House should at this time turn to private members' business.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether hon. members would consent to extending this debate into the private members' hour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that I had the experience of leaving this chamber and having my personal contributions refunded, and having to readjust to another way of providing myself with a living. I have no quarrel with the fact that at that time I had no pension entitlement as a Member of Parliament.

I did draw a pension for a short time, and while I freely admit it would have been nice if it had been larger, at least—as I sometimes put it—it bought the groceries and it was much better to have it than to have nothing at all. This was at a time when it was not quite as easy, having been longer in the House, for one to make a personal readjustment and obtain gainful employment. I think the original principle is still sound.

● (4:00 p.m.)

Without going into the amount of the pension, I feel one of the criticisms of the present proposal is that it departs radically from the concept of what is a Member of Parliament's pension. I disagree with the parallel which has been drawn in some speeches between the pensions of Members of Parliament and the pensions of civil servants, those in industry, and so on, in a situation wherein one would normally expect to work until a definite retirement date.

It seems to me the departure has stemmed from the fact that the proposed bill contains in its recommendation No. 3 of the report of Dean Curtis, to which reference has been made earlier. This recommendation would entitle a member to a pension after he had spent six years in the House. The bill ignores the parallel suggestion that if one is to be entitled to a pension after such a short period of service, the pension should not be payable until a certain retirement age, and the age suggested here is 55.

If a person has been here for only six years and presumably leaves at a fairly early age, it is evident that in the majority of cases no contribution would have been made in an amount that would pay for such a pension for the rest of that person's life. Nor do I think it

is proper to argue that a member who has been in this chamber for only six years would not be able to make the necessary readjustment in respect of a previous occupation or find some other occupation after leaving this chamber.

On the other hand, in any ordinary concept of a pension with contributions calculated for a period of years into the future, a modest pension entitlement could be considered warranted. I would suggest that this consideration, apart from any other, is sufficient for not passing in its present form this particular part of the bill. As one of my colleagues quite properly noted, this whole scheme was hurriedly brought before the House. It was rushed through the committee and brought back into this chamber, and no one can say there was an opportunity for the proper, rational consideration to which such a proposal should be entitled.

Having said that, I must say that on balance I agree with what was said by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), to the effect that the timing, apart from any other consideration, is not very appropriate in view of the stated policies of the government. I agree with him that if we are to be asked, as we are, to support the policies of the government in respect of the economy and the slowing down of inflation, regardless of what we may think of the merits of this proposal which the government is putting forward to deal with such matters, at least we should be asked to set a good example ourselves and the government should see that any measure it presents is in keeping with its general policy position at the time.

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I have only a few remarks in respect of this particular motion. It deals with the base on which pension contributions are to be made. I believe Dean Curtis summed it up fairly well when he said we can take 7½ per cent on \$18,000 or a higher percentage on \$12,000 in order to reach the same amount. I suggested to Dean Curtis that it might be preferable to base the contribution on the \$12,000 so long as the result could be adjusted in some way. However, that is not a point on which I feel strongly.

The government has decided differently, and it is the government's responsibility. The government is doing in this case what Dean Curtis recommended. Having said that, it is not my intention to support the amendment. This government has taken its responsibility