

Government Orders

Mr. Waddell: Well, not in this bill but often in some agreements in court or as part of the divorce settlement. The only problem is that the pension, as I understand it, still goes to one person, usually to the man. Then the man does not live up to his obligations under the court order.

What has to happen then is the woman has to go to court. She has to hire a lawyer or line up to get a prosecutor and the man's bank account or wages are garnished. It takes time, it is expensive and often times the woman does not get anything. The husband of course sometimes resists. She may get money, but would it not be better if we just split that up and the bill dealt with that and the modern situation and made it easier for the woman? I think that was the principle behind our amendments.

As the hon. member said, suppose the man dies. Suddenly the pension is gone and it is not even—

An hon. member: She is deemed dead.

Mr. Waddell: And she is deemed dead. I am laughing, but it is not a laughing matter. That is what we tried to do on our amendments and I am sorry the government did not accept them.

Before I sit down, I wanted to tell the hon. member that I received a letter today from a woman in Port Moody who is a widow. She wrote saying that she has an 18-year old son. He is six foot six and weighs well over 200 pounds. She was getting a child allowance from the government and then it was cut back. She said that her pension was increased but it was not enough to pay for all the clawbacks and the cutbacks.

We have a government that is not totally reforming the pension system and is out there clawing back different allowances. Here is this poor woman who has to feed this giant of a kid on less money from this government. That really is not justice.

I do not know if the hon. member wants to comment on that. It is another example of a difficult situation for people living in the real world in Canada.

Ms. Black: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam, a neighbouring riding of mine. We are very close in the lower mainland of Vancouver.

I want to expand on the pension splitting provisions of this bill. The method of division proposed in this bill is

flawed because it does not provide for consistent treatment of federally regulated employees in the Public Service. The government in fact had models to choose from, models that work quite well. There is the Canada Pension Plan with automatic division of credits or the flexible provisions of the Pension Benefits Standards Act. The government chose neither of those two models.

Instead, the government decided to limit the benefit distribution to one method only, the much more restrictive, cumbersome and less fair lump sum transfer. This method is not easily acceptable and it has a lot of built-in time delays and court costs. The evaluation of these lump sum amounts fails to take into account many factors.

There were a number of options presented at committee stage that would have improved the bill. Unfortunately the government did not accept them.

The key thing to remember in this legislation is that it does in fact make some small measure of improvement because it does allow for pension splitting, even though it is an imperfect model.

My concern which I tried to articulate in the comments I made is that it will not benefit those women who have been cheated out of a fair share of the pensions they, in fact, worked for over the many years they may have been married.

I gave the example of the woman who was the spouse of a diplomat. She was married for some 30 years and was not allowed to work by conditions of her husband's employment. By this government's own conditions, she was not allowed to have employment. When that marriage split up she had no provision to access part of the pension she had helped her husband earn.

Now this bill does nothing to remedy that situation for those women who have been cheated out of a lifetime of earnings and a share in the pension plan.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak to Bill C-55, which concerns changes in the superannuation plan for the Public Service, the RCMP and the Armed Forces. I estimate that in my own riding of Carleton—Gloucester the majority of my constituents are employed either by the Public Service, the RCMP or the Armed Forces.