

Government Orders

On committee amendments, the NDP had four of our amendments accepted by the government in committee. The government proposed its version, disclosure. The bill will now ensure that non-plan member spouses have equal access to their spouses' pension information. This will help former spouses to obtain a fair settlement of a pension they helped to earn.

On period of co-habitation, this ensures that the absence of a court order specifying the period of co-habitation. The minister must use provincial family law guidelines in determining the period.

On valuation regulations, two amendments provided direction to regulations of pension valuations to follow sound and fair methods.

There was another motion with regard to surpluses. I tried to have that motion introduced in the House. It was moved out of order. It was a very important motion because the issue of surpluses in the pension fund is one that should not be done by regulation. It should be done by legislation. The NDP's motions tried to identify those various areas.

In summing up, I want to say how really enthused I was as I entered into deliberations on this bill and looked at the possibilities of many changes where we could have had a management board set up at no cost to the government. A management board could have been brought together with some government people, the employees, the retirees and spousal representation so they had some input as to what was going on.

When we failed at that we tried to get them on an advisory board, but we could not even get them included on that.

It is not the intention of the government to allow input from the outside. This is clearly a regulatory bill. It has moved away from legislation into regulation and it will be regulated by the government.

Because everyone seems to feel that there is protection there with regard to indexing, let me stress that all it would take for this government to make those changes would be some changes in the Income Tax Act that would nullify benefits within the indexing of pensions.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on third reading on Bill C-55 with great disappointment. I believed the government in its first communiqué to the people of Canada, that this bill was to correct certain anomalies and improve the

pension of our public servants, RCMP and armed forces personnel.

Those of us who have a special interest in Public Service pensions have been well aware for some time that many changes are needed to make the regime of Public Service pensions fairer, even to simply bring it in line with the rules governing other pension plans.

I want to pay special tribute to a few members of this House. It strikes me that we had a rather good contribution to the debate last Friday when the member for Restigouche—Chaleur tabled I believe about 77 Liberal amendments which were all debated but defeated by the government. I want to pay tribute also to the member for Carleton—Gloucester who has a deep interest in pensions, the member for Ottawa South and his great knowledge of the whole question, and especially to my colleague from Ottawa West who has made a good contribution to this debate today in the beginning of the debate on third reading, an important stage of any bill.

I recognize that we will have to persevere and continue in this work of ours to try and improve the pension plans of public servants to make them fairer. That is the theme we should try and development.

Unfortunately the Conservative government has not taken the opportunity to make the Public Service regime fairer. An opportunity to amend this pension regime does not come every day and one must recognize that. It is astonishing to me that the government has not taken its responsibility in this area more seriously. It gives us hope but it did not produce anything of any substantive change, in my view, to make this plan fairer.

Perhaps I should not be surprised, given the attitude this government has shown toward the Public Service of Canada. Over the last seven years it has targeted the Public Service unfairly, mostly for political gain. It has made the Public Service of Canada the scapegoat for its own mismanagement and destroyed morale in the Public Service.

The Tories have been negligent in their responsibilities. As members of the Official Opposition, my colleagues and I have done our best to counter this negligence. Our efforts were obvious in the number of our amendments in committee, which were mostly defeated by the Conservative members. We tried in the House to come back with some substantive arguments to convince the majority of this House that the report stage