

State Pensions

The bill contains amendments concerning the effect on pension entitlements of pensioners from one plan who become members under a different pension plan in some other service of the Government of Canada. These amendments relate to the report made by the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates to this House on November 6, 1973, that the various restrictions and limitations on the receipt of pensions should be removed in these circumstances.

In the light of this motion and report, the government undertook to conduct a complete review of the principles which should govern the pension plans for which it is responsible. As a result of this study the government has concluded that one of the basic principles under these pension plans should be that a person appointed to a position under a different plan should not forgo his pension entitlement. Another principle which was confirmed by this study as still being appropriate was that provisions of pension plans may vary for groups within the federal service. As a result, amendments are being introduced in the various acts where a restriction exists to permit a pensioner who is re-employed to receive his or her pension unless he or she again becomes subject to the same pension plan under which that pension was paid.

Provisions are also included to permit the transfer of pension credits from one government plan to another in certain situations where such transfer provisions do not already exist.

Those are the principal amendments of broadest application to several of these acts. In addition, there are numerous amendments consequential upon new provisions in other legislation or designed to remove anomalies in the interest of greater consistency, deal with problem cases and a variety of matters which have arisen in the course of administering the various acts to which this bill applies.

The bill proposes the introduction of contributions to the Judges Act, a feature which is common to most of the pension plans covering the federal public service. As hon. members will have noted, members of the judiciary appointed before February 17, 1975, will be required by this bill to contribute 1½ per cent of their salaries toward the cost of the improved level of judges' widows' benefits proposed under Bill C-47. Judges appointed after February 16 will contribute 6½ per cent of their salaries toward the cost of their own and their survivors' pensions.

This rate is the contribution rate also proposed under Bill C-23 for the new superannuation plan for Lieutenant Governors and is the same rate as is paid by Senators under the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. Similarly, another amendment to the parliamentary pension plan will increase the rate of contribution to 6½ per cent of the Prime Minister's salary in respect of the Prime Minister's pension. At the same time the minimum age at which a former Prime Minister can draw his pension will be reduced from 70 to 65, which is now a more normal age for the commencement of retirement pensions than when the higher age was introduced in 1963.

The increase proposed in the level of the pensions of the widows of former Prime Ministers from one-third to one-half of a former Prime Minister's pension corresponds to the increase proposed under Bill C-47 in the level of pensions for the widows of judges.

This completes my description of the substance of the most important of the 106 clauses in this bill. Clearly it would not be possible to explain all of them today, but there will be ample opportunity to do so when the bill is before the Special Joint Committee on Employer-Employee Relations in the Public Service, or the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates depending on the resolution of the matter referred to earlier this evening. Mr. Speaker, I recommended to the House second reading and passage of this bill.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, seeing me rise again on this occasion one might be inclined to say this is my day in the House, but I certainly do not want to give that impression.

It affords me a great deal of personal pleasure and satisfaction to speak on second reading of this bill. It is the culmination of many resolutions and private members' motions. We have seen them lauded sometimes and other times criticized, but eventually always ending up down at the very bottom of the list. When the subject matter of the motion I had put forward was accepted in the House I was very pleased. It was sent to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates where we heard witnesses from the armed services, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Treasury Board and others. That committee unanimously recommended the contents of that motion to this House and, hopefully, to the government.

On page 1, clause 2, under the heading Public Service Superannuation Act there appears this title "Equality of Status" and it is precisely that at which I have been driving. In many ways there was an inequality of status. In the present year, International Women's Year, I suppose many people think I am referring to inequality of status as between females and males. Yes, that did exist, but that is not with what my motion deals. It is not its purpose.

● (2110)

I felt for years that there was an incredible inequality of status affecting public service personnel such as members of the armed services, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, members of parliament and senators, in that they did not enjoy equality of status with regard to their superannuations. I do not know; I suppose it goes back to old General Lafleche, or to the mid 1930s, when it was deemed wrong for public servants to draw two salaries or benefits from the Crown. For example, on appointment to the position of deputy minister of national defence, the public service salary of the general and his pension entitlement were fused into the one salary, because it was deemed wrong at that time that he should draw two benefits.

As I have explained previously, people who have served in the armed forces originally were completely prohibited from joining the Public Service of Canada and drawing superannuation while serving with the public service. It was held at that time that no double benefit should be paid to any public servant.

The principle was set aside when members of the armed services, and of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police up to and including the rank, or its equivalent, of warrant officer class 1 were allowed to retire on full pension and enter the service of the Government of Canada without any