

● (1510)

I have heard from some former colleagues in this House who got married after they left here; they discovered that in the event of their death they had no widow's pension to leave to their widow. How nonsensical can we be that we do not recognize a woman's rights as a woman rather than on the basis of her attachment to a man and as to when that attachment took place. Let us get to the point where we treat men and women equally.

By the same token, there is something else we do to widows which is quite unfair. Like the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour), I think this whole package in Bill C-34 is too rich. He was probably speaking for himself rather than his party. I may not have the support of all my colleagues in saying this bill is too rich.

Again with the judges, and it is the same with members of Parliament, public servants, armed forces people, retired railway workers or what have you, if the man dies first, the widow gets only a portion of that pension. However, if she dies first, he receives the whole pension, 100 per cent. Maybe that was something to boast about when society first began establishing survivor benefits, but surely it cannot be defended in a day when we insist on equal rights between men and women.

I would like to see all of these inequalities and unfairnesses to widows corrected or removed, not only from the Judges Act but from all our of our pension legislation.

Still on the subject of widows, I am glad to see in this bill a provision to increase the pensions of widows of judges. I support that in principle. However, when I look at the amount, the minimum of \$13,900 a year, subject to indexation down the road, I think of the fact that not long ago we passed a bill to provide pensions to the widows of disabled veterans, but the amount is nothing at all compared to this figure. What is worse, and in fact scandalous, is the fact that we provided that in some cases those widows should have to wait six and a half years before they draw the pensions to which Parliament has now said they are entitled.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Shame!

Mr. Knowles: My colleague says shame. The whole House of Commons ought to say shame.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Shame!

Mr. Roberts: Shame!

Mr. Knowles: Now it is unanimous. I have a "shame" from each of the three parties in the House.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Move a "43" on Monday.

Mr. Knowles: Seriously, when are we going to come up to date? One of the arguments will be that if we give this kind of lead in Parliament, private pension plans will have to do the same. So what? One of the things Parliament should do is give the lead. As I said, the amounts in this bill make it look like something totally different from the normal pension statutes

Judges Act

with which we deal. I am glad to see a little something by way of principle for widows, but I wish we would apply that principle in all pieces of legislation.

I urge that throughout the whole gamut of pension arrangements the widow's pension should be the same amount as the husband would get if she had died first. I argue as well that the person who is usually referred to as a second wife—she might not be, she might be the first wife of the old chap—should get the widow's pension despite the fact she may have married him after he left the bench or retired from whatever employment he had.

I know of cases where the so-called second marriage has lasted longer than the first. I know of many cases where in the so-called second marriage the wife had a great deal to do by way of attending to her husband in a period of illness and when the illness ended in his death, there was nothing for her. She may have been married to him for 25 years, but there was no pension for her because she married him after he went on pension.

I am glad the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona said what he did in this area. It prompted the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence (Mrs. Appoloni) to make an interjection. That prompted the hon. member for Perth to spend a good portion of his remarks on the question of how we treat these widows.

We have come a long way since I came to this place some years ago. However, we are still so far behind that we do not have the right to say we apply equality between men and women in terms of pension arrangements.

Miss Jewett: Or anywhere else.

Mr. Knowles: As my colleague appropriately adds, or anywhere else. She is on the list to speak in this debate and may have something to say on this score.

Having picked the middle or latter part of my speech out in order to give this matter the importance it deserves and because it followed on what had been said by others, I commend the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona on the statement he made on December 1 and again today with respect to this bill on the ground that it is rather rich. It is. The salary proposals, as I understand them, are such that although at the present time federally appointed judges draw salaries ranging from \$47,000 to \$69,000 a year, the new range will be \$65,000 to \$88,000.

I know all the arguments for high salaries—the need to get competent people and the fact that judges are lawyers who could make a great deal more in private practice. I also know that this is a time of restraint. Every day some motion under Standing Order 43 calls for something to be done for some needy group, and the government says no. In the Speech from the Throne, the government said it planned help where help is needed.

Certainly salaries have to go up. That is the course of history. When I first came here on a salary of \$4,000 a year and discovered that cabinet ministers of the day were getting