

paid for. It should not be tolerated in a modern democracy.

We are spending a great deal of money ensuring that our democratic institutions survive. We spend a great deal of money ensuring that democracy functions in a reasonable way through the holding of elections to choose members of Parliament to come into this place to pass laws. Surely in the face of that, the government ought not to be bringing forward laws which we all know mean that a faceless bureaucrat in the offices of the Treasury Board, a few blocks away from this Chamber, will enact laws different from what the elected representatives have passed and have them prevail over Parliament's own laws. It should not be tolerated in this day and age.

There are many other issues that arise that I will not deal with; the issue of survivors' benefits being 50 per cent rather than that which is prescribed in the Pension Benefits Standards Act having been well commented on by my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier. This government has a pension plan for its employees that does not meet its own standards.

On the matter of MPs' pensions, I have been on the record as saying I favour reform of them. I do not think this is the appropriate vehicle for doing that and the study that has been announced at least gets us started on the road to it. As a younger member of Parliament, I feel free to say that I do not feel that any of us should be comfortable with the payment of pensions at an early age. Rather than the view taken by my colleague from Annapolis Valley—Hants earlier this evening which focused on the so-called double-dipping issue, the focus should be on the time at which pension payments are receivable. If it were changed it would address the issue of double-dipping as well.

These are things that need to be dealt with in an independent review and that is the only way with which they can be dealt with any real integrity on the part of members of Parliament who, after all, are in a very apparent and real conflict of interest in trying to deal with their own packages of payments and benefits. We need the assistance of outside experts in reviewing that.

Government Orders

I do not need to say anything more about that or about this bill. I am pleased that we will be voting against it. Despite the fact that it contains many good things, this is a bill that should not be passed by this Parliament.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise and make a couple of points.

First of all I want to ask the hon. member to clarify the position of the Liberal Party with respect to the issue of the pensions of members of Parliament. I recall well in this House when the Leader of the New Democratic Party raised this issue during the course of debate on Bill C-55 that she met with considerable resistance, both from the Official Opposition and from the government.

She raised concerns about a number of aspects of the pension plan, including in particular double-dipping and the age at which the pensions vest.

I am very pleased that the Leader of the New Democratic Party was able to obtain an assurance from the President of the Treasury Board that there will be a full independent review of all aspects of the pensions of members of Parliament.

In December last year I tabled a motion in this House which called for a non-partisan independent commission to review all salaries, pensions and benefits of members of Parliament and particularly to identify inequities in the pension plan by holding public hearings and examining other jurisdictions within and outside Canada. The commission was to report within six months of its establishment.

I am very pleased that at last it seems that, under some pressure, there is movement in this regard toward an independent review.

I would like to get some clarification from the hon. member with respect to the issue of an independent review. I know my colleague from Kootenay East in particular has been lobbying for this for some time now.

Our representative on the committee, my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, and many others have been calling for this independent review and I would hope that we would have the full support of the Official Opposition as well in calling for this.