

Statute Law Amendment Act, 1970

amend certain acts that provide for the payment of those pensions, be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-194 has been considered and debated at each of the stages thus far, namely, second reading, the standing committee stage and the report stage. Our views on this legislation have been made very clear, I trust, both in the statements that we have made and in the recorded votes that took place in this House on Friday. Therefore, it is not necessary to extend the debate at this time.

I shall endeavour to take less than my allotted time. I shall endeavour not to provoke a lengthy debate, but there are a few things that I think should be said before we finish with Bill C-194. As we have made very clear, one part of this bill has our complete support. I refer to the portion of the bill that establishes the principle that pensions of retired civil servants and of others whose pensions come from the federal government should be escalated in the years after retirement.

This bill provides that there are to be increases in the pensions of all civil servants who are now retired, and of those who come under all the categories covered in this bill, and that from now on when persons on the various federal pensions retire those pensions will be subject to increases each year thereafter if the cost of living continues to rise. I need not take any time to remind the House of the urging that I have carried on with respect to this matter for a great many years. But I repeat that I am very happy that this principle is being written into law.

The other part of the bill is a part that some of us resent very deeply. We think it was quite unfair, almost an insult, to put into a bill that is providing just one thing for everybody else a substantial revamping of the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. Entirely apart from questions of judgment that one might make as to the generosity or otherwise of the changes that are made in our pension plan, we just do not think it is fair to ask Parliament in the same bill to do something for all pensioners that come under the federal wing and then to single ourselves out and do for ourselves something very special, something over and above what we are doing for everybody else. We indicated our opposition to this by the amendments that we moved at the report stage, and by the four recorded votes that took place last Friday.

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

Any vote at this stage would of course be meaningless because those of us who like one part of the bill but do not like the other would have to say that if we voted for the bill we would be voting for the increases in pensions for retired civil servants, but if we voted against the bill we would be voting really against the provision for increasing the pensions of Members of Parliament. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I suppose we have to settle for the fact that, thanks to the report stage, we have been able to make our position clear by the way we voted on Friday last. But in my view there are, as I have already said, a few things that should be put on the record before this debate closes.

The first thing I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is perhaps a repetition of something I have said at other stages, but it concerns me even more now than it did when we were dealing with this legislation last week and the week before. I refer to the fact that there are many retired civil servants, and many widows of retired civil servants, who are due for bitter disappointment at the end of April. I refer to those retired civil servants and to those widows of retired civil servants who are receiving pensions so low that they are also receiving amounts under the War Veterans Allowance Act.

As hon. members know, there is no means test, no needs test or dollar ceiling, or any limit whatsoever on the escalation that is to take place in the pensions of retired civil servants or their widows. There is a formula, based on the number of years from the time they left the service, and that formula is applied mathematically. When the percentage calculation is made the person drawing the pension gets the increase. There is no question about it. There is no means test, no needs test, and there is no dollar limit.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the case of those who are receiving the War Veterans Allowance it is now quite clear that the amount they receive as an addition to their public service pension as a result of this legislation, will be cut off their War Veterans Allowance. I mentioned this at the second reading stage. I brought it up again in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. I was told there that this would have to be dealt with in the general context of the War Veterans Allowance Act, rather than under this legislation. I made the same statement here at report stage, and got the same reply. I do not accept that reply, Mr. Speaker. It is in this bill, C-194, that we are making this