

usages, and the dangers that lurk in their path, are any better qualified to resist these wiles at eighteen than at sixteen years. My hon. friend says that we should not tinker with the law every year. I agree with him, and I wish to point out that I have not been tinkering with the law. This law has been on the statute-book for five or six years without an attempt to have it changed. We have experience as to the character of the law and its working. When that law went on the statute-book, it was predicted that it would lead to blackmailing. It was affirmed that it would be a weapon in the hands of unscrupulous females for the purpose of inflicting injury upon innocent males who themselves were the ones that ought to be protected by the law against the wiles of the seducer. Practically all these fears with regard to the operation of the law have proved groundless.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). No.

Mr. CHARLTON. My hon. friend says "no." I do not know of a case where this law has not proved beneficial. I do not know of a case where this law has not been calculated to punish the vilest of all criminals, the one who robs a female of her virtue. It has met with the approbation of all classes of society, and if the law is necessary or salutary at all, I assert that it would be proper to advance the age from sixteen to eighteen years of age, for the purpose of affording more efficient security than it now does. My hon. friend from Queen's (Mr. Davies) says: Leave well enough alone. Well, of course, that is an admission that that law is a good one.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) I said we had gone far enough, and possibly too far.

Mr. CHARLTON. Perhaps the hon. gentleman did not mean what he said. My opinion is that if you have a thing in a pretty good position you should better it if you can. The Minister of Justice said, there is no evidence that there is any popular opinion asking for an amendment of this law. I beg to differ with the hon. gentleman. As far as I have been able to follow public sentiment, there is a general expression of feeling that the age of consent ought to be eighteen years, and the action of the House in granting the first section of this Bill, was met with the general approval of the public and press of this country. Having watched the indications of public sentiment myself in this matter, I can assure the hon. gentleman that he makes a mistake when he says there is no public sentiment asking for this change. The Government may not have been memorialized by judges or police magistrates, but the amendment is proposed on the broad basis of the protection of female virtue, and the object of the law is to make it a penal offence to destroy the virtue of the female. I can imagine no reason why a girl under

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eighteen years of age should not be protected as well as a girl under sixteen.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) Why not make it nineteen?

Mr. FERGUSON. Or forty-five.

Mr. CHARLTON. We have got to stop somewhere.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) Why?

Mr. CHARLTON. Because we assume that at the age of eighteen a girl has acquired enough knowledge of the world to lead us to say that she should take care of herself. But, while she is between sixteen years old and eighteen, we may presume that is not the case, and that she is as much in need of protection between sixteen and eighteen as she is between fifteen and sixteen years. The Solicitor General informs us that there is no desire, so far as he knows, for a change in the law. Well, the hon. gentleman must have read the newspaper press of the country very carelessly. I have followed a great many newspapers, and I do not remember a single case where a Canadian newspaper favourable to restrictions of any kind whatever has pronounced against this amendment. However, if the Government denies this application; if my hon. friend the leader of the House goes back upon the record he made once when I felt so grateful to him for assistance in this matter; we will have to wait. I had to wait for a good many years before I got this Bill through, and I had to wait three years before it went through the Senate. I may have to wait further until I have that Bill perfected, but I have no doubt that I will attain my object in the end. I shall, of course, vote against the amendment of the Minister of Justice, and I hope we may have the yeas and nays.

Amendment, six months hoist, agreed to.

#### SUPERANNUATION ACT.

Mr. McMULLEN moved second reading of Bill (No. 6) to amend the Superannuation Act.

Mr. FOSTER. My hon. friend knows that I have a Bill on the Government Orders dealing with the question of superannuation. I might suggest that the hon. gentleman retain his Bill on the paper until my Bill comes up for discussion in the House, and we then could take up the whole question together. Of course that is as the hon. gentleman feels in the matter.

Mr. McMULLEN. Mr. Speaker, I think that is the fifth time during my parliamentary life that I have had the privilege of bringing before this House the question