

Under the terms of section 44(1), supplementary death benefits are paid to the widow of a married male contributor. On the death of a married female contributor, they are paid to her estate. A woman can therefore will the supplementary death benefits to someone other than her husband. Since we see marriage as a partnership in which responsibilities and benefits are shared, we believe that the responsibilities of women and men to their spouses should be the same. Therefore, we recommend that the federal Public Service Superannuation Act be amended so that (a) there will be no differences in the provisions on the basis of sex, and (b) the surviving spouse of a contributor will be paid the supplementary death benefits.

I feel this question, in the same way as any other important work condition, should be a subject of collective bargaining; but with a dozen or so unions in the field, even though they do operate through a joint council on some issues, this is often less than practical. However, the present system through which employees and their representatives can make representations to the government is totally unacceptable. The system works this way: there is a superannuation advisory committee whose members, while they may represent employees organizations, are not chosen by those organizations; instead they are appointed by the government itself. The committee may petition the minister for an investigation or for an opportunity to make representations on behalf of retired public servants, but it remains entirely within the minister's discretion to decide whether any consultations should take place.

In place of this paternalistic and outmoded system I propose the creation of a board of trustees some of whose members would be nominated specifically by employees' organizations. Such a board would have the power to make effective recommendations to Treasury Board upon its own initiative. Believe it or not, the present system has been in force since 1928. I quote the following:

While the association met with repeated defeat in their attempts to secure an appeal board or council, they did gain a momentary degree of satisfaction in 1928 with the creation of an advisory committee on the Superannuation Act. In an ill-concealed attempt to quell discontent over the fact that the government was obviously not going to act on the report of the 1928 committee, King's government established the advisory committee in December, 1928. The committee was composed of five representatives from the staff side and five nominees of the government. The associations represented on the committee . . . were picked by the government in a unilateral decision. The committee was to act in an advisory fashion and to report to Treasury Board on matters of a general nature pertaining to the administration of the act, on specific questions referred to it by Treasury Board and on proposed amendments to the act and regulations. Despite the sense of accomplishment and the back-patting which went on in the associations as a result of the creation of the advisory committee, dissatisfaction soon set in. The committee made numerous suggestions, particularly with respect to legislative changes in the act but neither Bennett's nor King's government was prone to accept these changes because they invariably meant increases or wider coverage necessitating greater government expenditures. The dissatisfaction in the service eventually led to the creation of a parliamentary committee on the Superannuation Act in 1938 which in turn produced increased dissatisfaction when its recommendations went unheeded for many years.

So we are still where we were in 1928. The employees who contribute to this pension fund have no effective say in what is done with the money—who should get it, how much should be paid and to whom. It is all up to the Treasury Board, specifically to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) who has received accolades today—not the accolades he deserves.

Supplementary Retirement Benefits

An hon. Member: Explain.

Mr. Reilly: There is really no difference between the administration of this pension plan and the pension plans of any private employer when it comes to administration. The employees have no say at all. The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and the hon. member for Ottawa Centre mentioned the mail they had received. I, too, have had a lot of mail on this subject but I will read only one of those letters. It reads as follows:

Why did I vote against the government in the last election? Not because of any anti-French-Canadian backlash, I am sure. I am bilingual by choice. My two sons I sent to LaSalle Academy and the University of Ottawa. They are bilingual and proud of it.

● (1510)

I voted against the government because of the ample evidence in so many departments that, vis-à-vis the bureaucracy, the government has failed to govern. The dog is being wagged by a tail that has quite apparently long since passed its level of competence!

For a horrible example of a pea-brained ego trip you should be aware of the lack of empathy with which the superannuated civil servant is treated, each month. Apparently he can no longer be trusted. Each month, in order to receive his superannuation which he has earned, he is required to subscribe to a declaration that he has not been moonlighting or otherwise working for any federal department or for the RCMP.

I will not go on; the letter just becomes more bitter. I should also like to quote from the favourite political authority of the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), that veteran of the political wars of the Florentine republic, Niccolò Machiavelli. When dealing with generosity he said this:

I say it would be splendid if one had a reputation for generosity; nonetheless if your actions are influenced by the desire for such a reputation you will come to grief. This is because if your generosity is good and sincere it may pass unnoticed and it will not save you from being reproached for its opposite. If you want to acquire a reputation for generosity, therefore, you have to be ostentatiously lavish; and a prince acting in that fashion will soon squander all his resources, only to be forced in the end, if he wants to maintain his reputation, to lay excessive burdens on the people, to impose extortionate taxes, and to do everything else he can to raise money. This will start to make his subjects hate him, and, since he will have impoverished himself, he will be generally despised. As a result, because of this generosity of his, having injured many and rewarded few, he will be vulnerable to the first minor setback, and the first real danger he encounters will bring him to grief. When he realizes this and tries to retrace his path he will immediately be reputed a miser.

So as a prince cannot practise the virtue of generosity in such a way that he is noted for it, except to his cost, he should if he is prudent not mind being called a miser.

I do not think the right hon. gentleman, or any of his colleagues for that matter, has been overgenerous with public servants. I conclude by saying that I do not deny that when it comes to the virtue of miserliness, they do not lack a certain prudence.

Mr. Ian Arrol (York East): Mr. Speaker, there is no simple solution to any of the problems in Canada today, except for the simple-minded. The only ones who feel that they indeed have the solution are those who have referred merely to their own wisdom, uncorrupted by research, consultation or reflection. When one does choose to look into a particular problem to seek a solution, one may start with the feeling that one intuitively knows the answer.