

Government Orders

With all seriousness, I really am disappointed that the parliamentary secretary has moved this motion. He was quite right, the debate was moving along. It was not going to get hung up. If I had made a motion which was going to be in order, we would have voted some time. Members could have chosen how to vote. You would not have cut the thing off.

Is the parliamentary secretary prepared to stake his parliamentary seat on the commitment in the letter I have not read yet between the President of the Treasury Board and the leader of the NDP that this enquiry into member's salaries, be it vesting or double-dipping and all the other ramifications, will start? There is no criteria set for the enquiry by the way; no time limit, no notice of who will be on the enquiry. Will he stake his seat that it is going to start by Labour Day?

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, to respond to the last question put by my friend, I do not believe that the President of the Treasury Board did stipulate a date but he has made a commitment. He is an honourable man and I believe that commitment will be carried out. I am sure my friend would agree that the commitment will be carried out.

With regard to the question of amendments before us, it is not true that amendments have been choked off in this debate. There have been more than 100 amendments put forward and debated during the course of the study of this bill at report stage and I am not sure how many dozens of amendments at committee stage.

The debate is not being cut off. It is important that the public of Canada realize that this debate can continue until 10 o'clock tonight. There is no question of that. In fact, because of the motion that I put, it frees up members who have spoken to speak again. That is a marvellous liberty which has now been extended to the House. I just wanted to set the record straight.

I am sure my friend, who had a distinguished career in the law—I knew him in Vancouver when he was in the pursuit of that profession—and has served in this House for 27 years now with great distinction, would not want to leave an incorrect impression with the public of Canada.

Mr. Parker: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order. Because of the exchange that took place I wonder if I could have the consent of the House to ask a short question. I did not have a chance for a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): We will have a lot of speakers here today and we had pretty close to 15 minutes in questions and comments. I had better just say no at this stage but I will ask for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There is no unanimous consent.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that debate is continuing and that I will have an opportunity to speak at third reading of Bill C-55 which is the Public Service pension reform bill. For a few minutes I must admit it looked very tenuous as to whether I was going to be able to achieve this.

Bill C-55 is a very large, technical omnibus bill that will amend five pieces of federal legislation which deal with federal pensions. The first one is the Public Service Superannuation Act which is the pension plan that currently covers approximately 312,000 federal government employees from every province and territory in this country; the Canadian Armed Forces Superannuation Act which covers nearly 88,000 Armed Forces members; the RCMP Superannuation Act which covers some 20,000 RCMP members; the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act which covers the pension plan for members and senators and the Pensions Division Benefits Act which provides for the division of benefits if a marriage or common law relationship breaks down.

This bill would also enact two new acts, the Special Retirement Arrangements Act and the Pension Benefits Division Act.

There are two main thrusts to this legislation, the first being the technical changes to ensure that federal pension plans comply with the new Income Tax Act; second, long-standing fairness issues such as pension credit splitting on marriage breakdown, allowing part-time employees to contribute to the pension plan, improving the leave without pay provision *vis-à-vis*