

Pension Act

have a say in the spending of the money of the people as have the members of the government. They were not given any prior right to stand up and order the affairs of this government in the secret and quiet precincts of the cabinet.

Hon. members who recognize this measure as a threat to their rights should stand up here and protest. If they do not do so, it is only to be assumed that they agree that this is the right thing to do. Posterity is built on such things as this. In the history of democracy and its growth the story of demagogues, men who grew and obtained power because they wanted the flexibility to do things that would override democratic rights, is old. Historically when people stand up and oppose this procedure they are doing the thing that is right and are making a contribution to democracy. Members on this side of the house from end to end are going to oppose this legislation with everything they have. This government can remember that we stood up here and opposed it because we believed it was the right thing to do. The people of Canada should know that we are opposing this measure because we look upon it as a threat to the very basic and fundamental democratic principles.

Some hon. Members: Carried.

The Chairman: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

The Chairman: In view of the fact that the debate has been a somewhat protracted one, perhaps I should read the question which is on the amendment of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration moves:

That section 2 of Bill No. 339 be amended by striking out subsection 1 thereof and substituting the following:

(1) Subsection 11 of section 3 of the said act is repealed and the following substituted therefor:

(11) The chairman, deputy chairman, and other commissioners and the ad hoc commissioners shall each be paid a salary to be fixed by the governor in council, except that the salary to be paid to the ad hoc commissioners and the said other commissioners shall be fixed at the same rate.

Shall the amendment carry?

Some hon. Members: No.

The Chairman: Those in favour of the amendment will kindly rise. Those opposed to the amendment will kindly rise.

Amendment agreed to: Yeas, 82; nays, 58.

The Chairman: I declare the amendment carried. Shall clause 2 as amended carry?

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, on the clause as amended, may I say that it occurs to me that the government has at one stroke, by

[Mr. Castleden.]

the very amendment which it has now forced through the committee, destroyed the whole argument against the section as amended. The Minister of Veterans Affairs, if he has attempted to advance any justification at all,—and the justification is inadequate—has suggested that the present provision of the statute is somehow or other detrimental to the affairs of the commission because it imposes an undue rigidity. Yet by the very same amendment which the government itself has now forced through the committee, it has imposed upon it the rigidity which, with respect to the whole section, it seeks to suggest is not proper, in that the government says that it will be rigidly bound with respect to the salaries of ad hoc commissioners. If it is proper to have rigidity in one branch of this matter, why is it not proper to have rigidity in the whole section and to have the salaries of all the commissioners fixed by parliament in the statute instead of by the governor in council?

Of the absurdity and the unsound nature of the government's argument in favour of forcing through this section and of imposing its will and its desire to make the pension commission the creature of the government instead of parliament, there can be no more complete illustration than the amendment which the government itself has just moved. If, Mr. Chairman, the principle of rigidity in one part of the section is appropriate and proper, then why should not the salaries of all the commissioners, including the chairman, the deputy chairman and the ad hoc commissioners, be fixed by parliament? Why should they not accept that measure of rigidity? The measure of rigidity consists only in this. If the government is prepared to go before parliament and to justify the need for an increase in the salaries of the commissioners, then it could be obtained; but without justification, if the act stood as it at present stands, of course that increase could not be obtained. Hence the only possible support or justification for the present amendment represented by this bill is that the government wishes or may wish to give increases which are not justified and which it fears to put before parliament because it knows they would not receive the approval of parliament.

I hope that the Prime Minister himself, who has come in just at this stage where the amendment moved by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has indicated how unfounded is this fear of rigidity, will realize that the very proposition which the government has just advanced and put through the committee indicates the unwarranted nature of the amendment represented by the whole