

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

Postmaster General by appointment by Commission under the Great Seal of Canada.

So far, Mr. Speaker, I have talked almost exclusively about structures and institutions and now I would like to deal with the question of personnel which is the subject of Part VII.

At present, it is impossible for a public servant to retire before age 60 without losing a substantial portion of the pension that he could receive at that age. This has created particular hardships for certain categories of employees such as air traffic controllers, aircraft pilots, certain National Film Board technicians and penitentiary guards, where the requirements of their work are such that, normally, continued employment after the age of 60 may be beyond an individual's capacity or may be held to be too exacting at that age. In other cases, public servants who might wish to take up a second career in their later years may hesitate doing so because of the severe reduction in their pension if they left the public service before age 60.

In a sense, these people are locked in by our present superannuation arrangements which do not provide for retirement before age 60, except on health grounds, without accepting an actuarial reduction in pension. Since many of these public servants have talents and experience of rather unique character which might well be of value to other sectors of society, the government believes it to be in the public interest to make possible a greater degree of mobility between the public and private sectors than has existed in the past, by lowering the age at which voluntary retirement can be sought, without loss of pension.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Not only will improved and more flexible early retirement provisions work to the benefit of individual employees, but they should also provide a firmer basis for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service.

There may well be a number of specific cases where individuals, after many years of useful public service, are no longer capable of meeting the changing requirements of their jobs. Situations like this can arise from a variety of circumstances including the unusually high pressures and tensions of executive employment as well as the failure to adapt to change. The existing retirement provisions do not enable the government to deal with cases like these in anything but very harsh terms, if at all, but the new provisions will enable the government to release such individuals from the public service without undue hardship to the persons involved. These new provisions should also enable the government to exact the high standards of performance required in a dynamic public service.

Since it is particularly important at the apex of responsibility in the public service that the public is served by the best people available at the height of their career, special provisions should be provided for those who occupy the positions of deputy minister or its equivalent.

[Mr. Drury.]

In the public sector, provisions for early retirement are also becoming more common. The Civil Service Superannuation Plan of one province, for example, has just been amended to provide a full pension for public servants at age 55 with 32 years of service. In the United States, federal servants may retire on a full annuity at age 55 once they have 30 years of service to their credit.

The proposals in the Government Organization Bill are in line with these provisions.

Mr. Speaker, there remain Parts VIII and IX of the Bill, but since these do not relate to the principle of the Bill but to matters which are consequential upon earlier parts which I have discussed, or which are transitional, I do not intend to deal with them at this stage. The schedules to the Bill list the acts for which the Minister of the Environment would be responsible and provide for further consequential amendments and so here again, I will not comment on them.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to review the main elements of the bill. The enactment of the Department of the Environment Act will greatly facilitate the mounting of a concerted attack by the federal government of the problems of pollution.

The enactment of the Ministries and Ministers of State Act and the amendment to the Parliamentary Secretaries Act, will enable the administration and the executive to come to grips much more effectively than in the past with the myriad responsibilities facing the government of Canada now, and with many other responsibilities that we know will fall to the government in the future. The enactment of this piece of legislation will also enhance and make clear the accountability of the Executive to Parliament—a particularly important provision in a period where the responsibilities that fall to the Executive appear to grow without an end in sight.

Finally, the amendments to the Superannuation Act will provide a new basis for the development of improved personnel policies which this government has regarded as a key to better management of public affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for the cooperation of hon. Members in giving this bill careful consideration and speedy passage.

[English]

**Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants):** Mr. Speaker, first, on behalf of hon. members, may I thank the minister for dealing with points of principle and leaving some of the details until later. I, myself, will concentrate on two or three subjects, instead of trying to cover the whole waterfront. It is unlikely that I shall spend much time in dealing with the fact that astronomic observatories are to be taken from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and put under the National Research Council. I think the appropriate place for the observatories would be under the authority of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) so that the government could keep in some kind of touch with rising unemployment.

**Mr. Gilbert:** Very good.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Five o'clock.