

Public Service Superannuation Act

should be deferred until there has been an opportunity to study the amending bill.

Another major amendment proposed would repeal those provisions in the act which would have come into force on August 1, 1957, and which would have restricted the augmenting of pension credits through employment after the age of 65 on and after that date.

The other amendments proposed will, I think, commend themselves to the house as relatively minor in nature and, as I mentioned previously, relate primarily to the elimination of administrative problems. The most important of these would require that re-employed former contributors under the act on again becoming contributors would be treated like all new employees and would become participants under the supplementary death benefit scheme under part II of the act, regardless of the fact that they had elected not to participate when the death benefit scheme was introduced in the house a year or two ago.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Chairman, I think that there should be general approval of the purpose expressed in regard to the amendments mentioned in the statement just given to the committee. However, I would strongly urge that the opportunity be taken to deal with a subject which goes much farther than the amendments now proposed and involves an improvement that I think is greatly needed in connection with the Public Service Superannuation Act. I mention that because while we are in the committee stage we are simply dealing with the desirability of introducing a measure to amend the Public Service Superannuation Act and to extend its application. For that reason it would be possible to redraft the bill, if it is in final drafted form, to include any suggestions that may be made. So it is appropriate on a motion of this kind to indicate the nature of amendments not already mentioned but which, in the opinion of many hon. members, could and should be included.

In the statement just made it has been indicated that the legislation is designed to extend the application of the present act to certain people to whom it does not now apply. It is also intended to provide a wider opportunity for election under the act. It seems that the remainder of the amendments are largely for the purpose of facilitating administration.

I believe the time is long overdue in Canada for an amendment to the act which will recognize the severe hardship being suffered by many former civil servants, members of the armed forces, former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and others whose

pensions were fixed at a time that the dollar was worth a great deal more than it is today. What I have to say does not of course apply to the disability pensions for service veterans, because consideration is given to them under another act.

I would point out, however, that it must be well known to all hon. members that there are men and women who gave long years of faithful service either in the civil service of Canada, as members of the armed forces, as members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or in the related services, whose pensions today, with the present value of the dollar, are hopelessly inadequate to meet the minimum demands of decent living. When this subject has been discussed on other occasions there has been some tendency to suggest that the amount paid was in the nature of a contract. There is the suggestion that it would be a practical impossibility to review the whole field of pension payments in these categories. I suggest, however, that we should consider the reasons for which these pensions were established.

It is recognized that those in the civil service, in the armed forces, in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and in other similar services are not paid as much as people of similar skill, devotion to their task and general ability might earn in private occupations. The pension has been regarded as something that will make it possible for them to live in modest decency in the years of their retirement after the active period of their service. Actually the date of retirement may be a fairly early one. For that reason we must consider this matter as an obligation of justice. Their pensions were fixed at a time when doubtless, in many cases, they were adequate to meet the demands of the principle upon which they had been established. It seems to me that this is a question of justice to those who have served their country well. In making the suggestion that there should be a review and that there should be amendments to the superannuation act at this time, I am not making any suggestion that is impractical or that is in any way beyond the ordinary considerations of government.

I would point out that similar consideration has been given to this problem in both the United Kingdom and the United States. To take the United Kingdom, where the parliamentary system is similar to our own and where the form of service may be more similar, I would point out that there have been a number of acts increasing the pensions payable to people in the categories I have mentioned as well as to others.