

Members' Retiring Allowances

I wanted to say a word about is that which was raised by the hon. member for Peace River. I think it is well that we try to keep clear in our minds exactly what the situation is. I noticed that the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the hon. member for Timiskaming were not too sure, between them, just what the situation was. I think it is this—

Mr. Martin: There is no doubt about what I think.

Mr. Knowles: Then the minister will agree with what I am about to say.

Mr. Martin: Not likely.

Mr. Knowles: Well, I think you will. The fact is that under the act as it now stands, a retired member of parliament, even though receiving the member's pension, is entitled to draw the old age security pension when he reaches the age of 70.

Mr. Martin: Everybody is.

Mr. Knowles: No question about it; the minister and I agree.

Mr. Martin: That is what I said, and all I said.

Mr. Knowles: But his parliamentary pension is reduced by the amount of the old age security pension, whether or not he applies for the old age security pension.

Mr. Harris: Has there ever been any doubt about that?

Mr. Knowles: No, not in my mind.

Mr. Harris: Then why waste time about it?

Mr. Knowles: But there certainly does seem to be a doubt in the minds of some members, and there is a misinterpretation being placed upon it, I think, down in the left corner. Let us have it clear, then, that there are two groups of people in the country to whom that provision applies. One group consists of members of parliament and the other group consists of recipients of the war veterans allowance. The parliamentary pension is on a contributory basis, as the hon. member said, but the war veteran has contributed something else. It should not be said that our burnt-out pensioners are in a different position, so far as that aspect of the matter is concerned.

So far as the old age security deduction from the parliamentary pension is concerned, I register no objection. But I do hope that we will soon cease making that deduction in the case of our burnt-out pensioners.

Mr. Macdonnell: Mr. Chairman, I wish to make a deal with you, that for 20 seconds you

should not apply to me the ruling you have just laid down. I say I hope the suggestion made by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan, and so admirably supported by the hon. member for Timiskaming, might be followed; that is that, failing any other arrangements regarding widows, we in this house, who are no exception to the public, might look into the matter further.

Mr. Shaw: I wish to make this perfectly clear, and what I shall say arises out of the observations made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. The hon. member for Peace River did not intend to leave any impression whatsoever to the effect that war widows had not made a contribution. He was simply referring to plans which we look upon and categorize as contributory pension or retirement schemes.

Mr. Nickle: With reference to the subject which you have ruled out of order, Mr. Chairman, and about which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre succeeded in getting in a few words, I would like to say that his final comment to the effect that any extension of pensions to widows should not be charged against the public treasury is one with which I fully agree.

However, my purpose in rising at the moment is to refer to comments already made by other hon. members as to public misunderstanding of the terms of the present Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. I received this morning, by way of Trans-Canada Air Lines, yesterday morning's issue of the *Calgary Albertan*. This newspaper carries a lengthy article under an Ottawa dateline by James R. Nelson, and is made up to a great extent of quotations such as this:

—Bona Arsenaute, youthful Liberal member for Bonaventure, Quebec, who—

According to this writer.

—was the father of the members' pension scheme adopted at the last session of parliament before the election.

This article aroused some concern in my mind because I believe through some unfortunate set of circumstances the writer, from the sources of his information, arrives at some erroneous conclusions. The lead sentence of this article reads:

Fledgling members of parliament elected for the first time last June will have to serve 17 years and contribute \$480 per year to a pension fund before they can retire on an annual life income of \$6,000.

Later in the article the author goes on to quote from the member who is said to be the father of this proposed pension plan, and he states as follows, quoting the hon. member for Bonaventure: