

*Pensions*

joint committee it will not be necessary for us to speak on each of the 94 clauses in the bill now before us.

I should like to express once again my appreciation of some of the improvements that have been made in the Public Service Superannuation Act while we have been considering this bill. For the most part they are technical improvements, an ironing out of a few anomalies.

It is also to be noted that the civil servants in general seem to like the term insurance arrangements that were brought in a number of years ago, and it is to be noted that these arrangements have been improved in that the amount of insurance that civil servants can carry has been increased, and the amount of the minimum benefit that obtains from the point of discontinuance in employment to death has also been raised. I suggest, Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to observe that a piece of legislation which caused quite an outcry when it was brought into this house a number of years ago has now been accepted as a desirable feature.

The only other comment I wish to make is to express once again my very deep regret that at a time when the government was reconsidering the Public Service Superannuation Act it did not seize the opportunity to make two other changes. I believe that on the one hand the government should have changed the formula regarding pensions for widows. At present a widow's pension is 50 per cent of what her husband's would have been. Some of the organizations suggested that these pensions should be raised to a much higher level; I think 75 per cent was the figure suggested in most cases, although some went even higher than that.

It seemed to me that at least 60 per cent, which applies to the pensions of widows of members of parliament, might have been written into this legislation. I regret that this was not done. I hope that, since the minister has said he has a number of amendments to present while we are going through this bill, he might even yet propose an amendment to make this improvement with regard to the pensions of widows of civil servants.

My other regret is that the government did not seize this opportunity to make the necessary amendments in the Public Service Superannuation Act to improve the pensions of civil servants already retired. We now recognize the need to escalate pensions. The government has recognized this in the case of the

Canada Pension Plan, and it has recognized it in the case of the Old Age Security Act. I do not think there is any question but that sooner or later we will have to recognize it in the case of retired civil servants. I am not going to speak at length on this aspect of the matter, lest someone raises a point of order as to whether or not the matter is before us. That is the trouble, Mr. Chairman; it is not before us and it ought to be.

• (8:00 p.m.)

I welcomed the response of the Minister of National Revenue to a question which I put to him on June 17. The minister said that he would have no objection to giving the joint committee on the public service a term of reference from the House of Commons to enable it to discuss this whole problem of the adequacy of the pensions of civil servants already retired. He knows me and I know him. He knows that having given me what I regard as a commitment, I shall hold him to it.

I have had to accept the condition that we cannot get at this matter until we have disposed of the other pieces of legislation that have been referred to that committee. But the committee is dealing with them. As a matter of fact, the joint committee on the public service is meeting right now; it was called to meet at eight o'clock tonight to discuss the three other bills. When the committee has disposed of those bills on collective bargaining, I will call upon the Minister of National Revenue to keep the commitment which he made on June 17 by bringing before this house a motion to give the joint committee on the public service a term of reference to enable it to discuss this very important problem.

Even if I disagree with some of the elements of the integration program that is before us, Mr. Chairman, I must confirm the general view that our pension legislation for government employees is by and large good legislation. Precisely because we have made the kind of improvements to our pension legislation which make it something of which we can be proud, and precisely because it does provide a good basis for retirement pensions for our public servants from now on, I think we should do the same thing for those who have already retired. There is far too much in parliament of this doing something for those who are with us now, for those who can lay some kind of an appeal before us, but of trying to forget those who were our employees in the past. This is an