

*Statute Law Amendment Act, 1970*

I heard the hon. member and other spokesmen for his party attempt to delete the improvements to the present scheme for Members of Parliament. Their approach was to strike out every single change proposed in this bill to the present scheme. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre did not offer a single amendment to improve the scheme. He deleted every change proposed. Instead of taking the opportunity of making the scheme, covering a relatively small number of people, consistent—

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Would the hon. member permit a question? Was not the purpose of my amendments to strike out everything except what was proposed for all?

● (4:10 p.m.)

**Mr. Francis:** The hon. member has given us a statement of principles that would guide him. He has indicated that in the amendments to the Public Service Superannuation Act it should be possible to introduce new features which he may regard as an improvement. I offered him a challenge which I hoped he would take on this occasion to introduce amendments consistent with these principles and write them into the bill. Certainly, they should be applied across the board. The 60 per cent provision for widows was in a previous act; there is nothing new about that. There are many other amendments for which staff associations are fighting as a matter of principle. I am sure that all of us would have been delighted to see a model piece of pensions legislation that is consistent with the hon. member's principles, but his approach has been to delete every other change.

The only fallacy in his argument is that few widows of public servants get pensions between \$500 and \$1,000 a year, or between \$1,000 and \$1,500. The hon. member says that the husbands of these widows were not of long service, but the way the plan is set up they will never be able to get the benefits. Therefore, there can never be an average rate of widow's pension that is in any way adequate. I suggest that the hon. member did not attempt to deal with the substance of the matter at that point. However, that is the way he chose to proceed.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** May I ask the hon. gentleman what our widows will get under the new provisions?

**Mr. Francis:** The widows will get a substantial improvement under the new provi-

[Mr. Francis.]

sions. If a member had, say, six years service they would get 60 per cent of \$3,700, which is a substantial improvement over what is offered now. I am sure the hon. member would agree that this would be desirable. Then, there will be the survivors' benefits for children on top of this, which were not there before, though they were available under the Public Service Superannuation Act. I did not hear the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre once say in committee that, although he was deleting this benefit, there should be a survivor's benefit in the member's plan. All of these benefits he denied, keeping the plan a substandard plan, the kind of plan that unfortunately has been in existence for too long.

I regret that I have had to speak on this question at such length. I am as strong in my convictions as the hon. member and I yield to no one. I know that the people I represent are civil servants, and that it is very easy to play to the gallery and to say that one did not take the pension for oneself. It is easy to tell them that we are terrible people who are lining our pockets instead of moving detailed amendments that will bring about an improvement in pensions legislation.

**Mr. Mac T. McCutcheon (Lambton-Kent):** Mr. Speaker, there are, of course, some parts of this bill of which I am critical, but there are many other parts of which I approve. Other members have mentioned the escalation clause contained in the bill and looked upon it as of great benefit. I look upon it with perhaps a jaundiced eye. Perhaps it is that I am cynical, but it seems to me that by including this cost of living escalation clause in our pension plan the government has admitted there is no way to stop this terrible escalation in our cost of living, and this causes me a little concern.

Another item that really bothers me is this. The government engaged the services of Professor Curtis from Queens University to study this plan, and he has done so for a couple of years. In my humble opinion, he brought in some very excellent recommendations. I wish to refer to one only. As I understood it, he recommended that this benefit be treated as a pension, not as a guaranteed income. He further suggested that the pension should not be payable until the recipient had attained the age of 55. I think he also inferred that if the pension were paid at a younger age, it should be the actuarial equivalent of the amount that would be payable at age 55.