

We do have figures here on the result of our last year's work, but if this is going to be taken care of I am not sure that there is much point in going into these now. There has been a gradual improvement.

Our point has been that the improvement has been very slow and we did not think the problem would be completely overcome until this last check, at the time of authorizing a benefit, was put into effect. I think our point will be completely taken care of within the next three weeks.

Mr. BALLS: If I may just add a point, Mr. Chairman, this is our aim. We have felt that we have now covered every possible avenue of error arising and that we will now have a system whereby these will be checked and, if at all humanly possible, prevented completely in the future before a person proceeds to retirement. There may be a few cases where a person proceeds to retirement without warning the branch where we may have to look at it at the time of retirement but we do hope we will have eliminated the possibility of errors arising after retirement.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee hopes that it will not see this in the Auditor General's report next year. It has been there for about three or four years now, and we hope that this is the last time we will look at it.

Mr. LONG: There is another year to report on in the meantime, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: I will back up one year, then. We will close off here in about five minutes. I wonder if—

Mr. HENDERSON: I might just make a reference to paragraph 52. I believe Mr. Bryce thought that this should perhaps be left until the Treasury Board is with us, but we did discuss this case, you will remember, in the Committee on May 3rd.

There is no suggestion here that the pensioner should have been penalized for this mistake, and I certainly agree that the officials of the Treasury Board obviously did the sensible thing. However, we do think that in the interests of effective financial control a letter should have gone forward to the pensioner explaining the situation.

This is a mistake that originated in the Superannuation branch, whereby she was overpaid, and our point was, as you will recall, that the action should have been evidenced by some letter or something to the pensioner in the interests of effective internal financial control, and that is the point the Committee will discuss with Dr. Davidson. I presume that you would agree with that.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. I think we have discussed the town of Oromocto.

Mr. BALLS: Mr. Chairman, may I just add one word in answer to Mr. Henderson on this. I would like to record the fact that the normal practice of the superannuation branch is to inform employees and annuitants of overpayment, or underpayment, with a view to collecting or reporting the amount as the case may be when deletion is authorized in the case of a debt. In other words, the normal practice is to so advise the person concerned.

The individual in this case was in her eighties. As the action had been taken by the Treasury Board to waive recovery, there was very real concern that this might create a shock to the widow of some 82 or 83 at the time, and