

Supply—Annuities to Widows

National Defence, to the Prime Minister, to the Minister of Justice—that they put an item in the supplementary estimates to pay that man an annuity until the day he dies. He is eighty-five years of age.

Mr. CAMPBELL: They will not need to pay him very long.

Mr. QUINN: I submit you are not dealing with all civil servants along the same lines when you deny this man a small annuity for superannuation.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Lest there might be a misunderstanding in the case of the civil servant that I mentioned a moment ago, I may say he was dismissed, not for any of the offences mentioned by the Minister of Finance, but for inefficiency, although, speaking from memory, I think he held the position for over three years, which would seem to negative even that charge. I am not particularly objecting to the estimate; I would be prepared to support any similar vote where money had been paid in and through some technical error it had not been properly applied. But I say if the principle is going to be invoked in one case let it be invoked in another. The principle on which this government acts seems to be: to him that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. The higher up civil servants and their dependents are well looked after, but the poorer civil servants—this man drew a salary of only \$70 a month—could not secure \$350.

Mr. DENIS (Translation): Mr. Chairman, I wish to protest against passing this item in favour of Mrs. Beatrice Bell, for the same reasons as those set forth a moment ago when opposition was taken to a vote for a pension to Lady Taschereau. If the act allowed a pension in the present case, the house would not be called upon to approve of this item. No exception should be made. The same rule should apply to everybody. If Lady Taschereau has no right to a pension, in consideration of the services rendered by her husband who, at his death, was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, I deem that the services rendered by Mr. Bell do not warrant any more the granting of a pension to his widow.

I wish to add that I was informed that Mr. Bell left to his children an estate of \$75,000, and nothing to his wife. I cannot see why the government should be called upon to support the widow when her husband could have left her a sufficient amount to provide for her needs. I am opposed to this item and I trust that the hon. members of this house will concur in my views.

[Mr. Quinn.]

Mr. ROSS (Kingston): I am not going to oppose this grant, but how can a member go back to his constituents and say, "I voted for such and such a grant, but I cannot do anything for your case because death took away your husband just two or three months short of the time when he would have qualified for superannuation." This is a letter from the chief accountant of the Finance department in reference to the case of a widow in my constituency:

Under the Civil Service Superannuation and Retirement Act, to which your husband was a contributor, it states that no allowance may be granted to an employee who has less than ten years' service. At the time of Mr. Hamilton's death his service was only nine years, five months and twenty-five days.

Here is a case where the man lived within four or five months of the time when he would have qualified for superannuation and left a widow and daughter without means of support, yet nothing is granted to them.

Mr. McRAE: I would ask the Prime Minister if the committee in approving this vote may consider that the precedent so established will be the policy of the government with respect to future cases of this kind.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Each case, I think, has always to be considered on its merits. If another case presented itself in which the circumstances were as distressing as these are, I have no doubt the house would take the same view.

Mr. McRAE: I do not think that quite answers my question. There is a principle involved here. I quite agree with what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said a few moments ago with respect to this case. Many hardships, many injustices, many unkindnesses are suffered by people under circumstances very similar to those surrounding this case. When considering such a case as this where the husband has left what might be considered a comfortable fortune to his family and has deprived his wife of any participation in it, it is only fair that we should also take into consideration many of the smaller claims as outlined by members on this side of the house. It is only right that an equal measure of justice should be accorded to these minor claims that have even more merit than the one in question.

Mr. BENOIT (Translation): Mr. Chairman, I wish to state in this house that the government of Canada must not consider itself in the present circumstances, in the light of a charitable institution. I am told that Mr. Bell earned much more than Sir Elzear Taschereau, I therefore cannot understand