

Age of Retirement

retirement on the basis of age and to clarify the exemption for bona fide retirement and pension plans in the current law.

During the ninety-fifth congress several of my colleagues authored legislation which I co-sponsored, in an effort to accomplish this goal. The legislation before us today is a culmination of those efforts.

As a result of studies by the subcommittee on employment opportunities and the committee on education and labour, an effort has been made to eliminate age as the sole criteria for hiring, firing, promotion or involuntary retirement. The congressman went on to say:

The major provisions included in H. R. 5383 are:

First, the upper age limit protected under the act for non-federal employees is extended from the current level of 65 years of age to 70 years of age 180 days after enactment.

Second, the upper age protection for federal employees is lifted entirely; and

Third, the exemption for bona fide retirement and pension plans under current law is clarified to prohibit involuntary retirement at an age less than the protected age under the act.

I do not want to go into further detail, because of the time requirement and because I think a number of my colleagues will want to speak on this matter.

Briefly, and in résumé, my proposal is that the question of mandatory retirement at age 65 be the subject matter of inquiry by the appropriate committee of the House, with a view to lifting that mandatory age completely as being, first of all, not in the national interest with regard to utilization of the capabilities of Canadian residents and, secondly, that it is, in effect, an abuse and an offence, at least in spirit, of our human rights' legislation both at the federal level and the provincial level. We can provide examples to show that there is no mandatory retirement age in the House of Commons unless one is defeated. A number of members very effectively carry out their duties and they are over the age of 65.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Why should John Smith, working in the public service of Canada, the public service of Ontario or the city of Ottawa, be told that at the age of 65 he must stop work, but his brother, Adam Smith, a member of the House of Commons, may continue and render good service? There is discrimination between those two persons, and it seems to me that now is the convenient time to initiate studies by members of the House, either in a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs or in the committee itself, and investigate this matter. It might consult public bodies with regard to the question and report back to the House. In essence, the government could consider those as proposals which would do away with mandatory retirement age at 65.

Mind you, anybody who wishes to retire under a private or public plan at age 65 should not have to suffer any penalty. Such a person should be able to exercise his or her right; and if there are entitlements to retirement at the age of 60, then, of course, actuarial and financial provisions should be made for that. However, what I am saying is that we should eliminate mandatory retirement at age 65.

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

Mr. Ralph Stewart (Cochrane): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) is to be commended for focusing the attention of the House on the sometimes precarious situation facing the ever-expanding number of Canadians now in their 60s who, because of the dramatic life-saving advances in medicine and technology in recent years, can look forward with confidence to a considerably longer lifespan than previous generations could anticipate.

I am not talking just of a longer life, but also of a healthier and potentially more productive one. I had a good example of this in the last few days in my constituency office. A gentleman came to see me. He had been in touch with me in the past, and had retired at the age of 66 from the Canadian forces base at Lowther, near Kapuskasing, where he had been granted an optional extra year because there was no one else to take his place. But now this year, when he is 66 and they have someone else to fill his job, he is obliged to leave. Of course, this is very sad, particularly because this individual happens to be a very young 66; he is vigorous and capable and has a great deal to offer.

● (1732)

It can be a very tough problem. Of course there are other arguments, and I know this as do other hon. members, that mitigate against keeping people for a long time.

In view of the furor south of the border which *Time* magazine calls "the revolt of the old", I am not surprised to hear motions similar to that moved by the hon. member for Edmonton West. What is disappointing in the motion is the assumption that the Government of Canada has imposed a universal, compulsory retirement age of 65 in legislation. Let me read a portion of the motion, as follows:

—the government should consider the advisability of enacting legislative proposals to raise the compulsory retirement age from 65 . . .

I want to emphasize that the federal government has never enacted legislation to force all active, able-bodied Canadians to leave the work force at age 65. Dr. Selye, who is a world authority on the body's physiological response to stress, and who is a Companion of the Order of Canada, has made some very pertinent observations on retirement on the basis of 40 years of observation. He has remarked:

. . . for many older people, the most difficult aspect of retirement to bear is the feeling of being useless . . . The continuous leisure of enforced retirement is certainly not an attractive way of life.

To suggest that Canadian statutes currently impose mandatory retirement on each and every citizen who reaches 65 years of age is simply incorrect. If such were in fact the case, the courts of this country would be overflowing with the estimated 188,000 Canadian men and women, 65 or older who, according to Statistics Canada, were employed in September, 1977. In fact during that same month the participation rate for Canadian men aged 65 to 69 years of age, that is, the labour force in that group expressed as a percentage of the population for that group, was estimated to be 26.7 per cent. I said earlier that 188,000 Canadians 65 years of age and over were calculated to have been employed in the labour force in Septem-