

Government Orders

We are not standing up for the president of the Toronto-Dominion Bank. I am not standing here pleading for somebody like the president of Alcan. I am not pleading to the parliamentary secretary for the fat cat labour leaders or the fat cat politicians. I am talking about average individual Canadians who have legitimate claims. In all goodness and fairness and with good intentions, I ask the parliamentary secretary to reflect on the reality in Canadian society today.

The men and women in the Department of Health and Welfare, as I said at the outset and as I am sure my colleague from Dartmouth would want to say, are first-class people. I tell my constituents all the time that in the office in my constituency in Sydney and Glace Bay there are superb people but the law is wrong. We have to change the law. If we do not change the law those people will continue to hurt.

Do you know what it is like to see a woman sitting in your office and crying because she cannot get a decision on the benefits to which she believes she is entitled? Do you know what it is like for a man to come to your constituency office and say: "I have four kids. I cannot get a decision?" That is pretty humiliating.

I am not asking the Government of Canada to write us a blank cheque. I am not asking for \$250 million as it is allegedly going to give in Montreal for economic development. I am not asking for \$800 million as we are giving to the farmers. They need more and rightly so. I am not asking for a blank cheque. I am asking the parliamentary secretary and the government opposite for a little bit of fairness and a whole lot of social justice.

Madam Speaker, you have been kind in this debate. You have allowed me to participate and to say the things I fervently believe. I conclude with these remarks. If we fail in giving those individuals some sense of decency and dignity, I have to ask myself: What are we doing in this Chamber? This Chamber is a great institution. A positive decision will give some confidence, some credibility to the Chamber and to the members in the Chamber, but a negative decision may lose my amendment. My colleague will have lost the amendment too.

The people who will lose are those Canadians who have very few people standing up for them anywhere in this country. Through you, Madam Speaker, I ask an hon. friend, a respectful and distinguished colleague in this House, to give careful, prudent and kind consideration to this amendment.

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East): Madam Speaker, I would like to join in the debate on this amendment.

I do not know what kinds of games the Liberal Party is trying to play in this House today. If the House leader of the Liberal Party had been to the committee—we had a member who represented the Liberal Party in the committee—he would know that the chief actuary came to the committee and explained the procedures very carefully.

I want to refer to the actuary's report that was presented to the House prior to the committee sitting. There are some rules that must be followed. The reality is that we have to abide by those rules. A chief actuary is appointed and I want to quote from his document that was presented because he had to present to the House. I had to question him with regard to that.

Ten minutes before we sat down in committee the actuary's report as to how we are supposed to deal with these things was being presented to the House. Very briefly, and this is from the chief actuary who does the studies when amendments are made, "in accordance with a request from the Minister of Finance the chief actuary shall, whenever any bill is introduced in or presented to the House to amend this act in a manner that would in the opinion of the chief actuary materially affect any of the estimates contained in the most recent report under this section made by the chief actuary, prepare, using the same actuarial assumptions and bases as were used in that report, a report setting forth the extent to which such bill would, if enacted by Parliament, materially affect any of the estimates contained in that report".

It is quite obvious. We are dealing with Bill C-39 that was going to affect the estimates of the Canada pension bill. The actuary, according to law, is supposed to find out what kind of costs are going to be involved in these