

Members' Retiring Allowances

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): I said the effect of this bill was to lengthen the time required for those participating in the scheme to qualify for the maximum pension.

Mr. Byrne: With deference to your ruling concerning ranging just a little farther afield than the actual clause under discussion, may I say that we have heard a great deal from the opposition side but very little from members on the government side. I would beg your indulgence for just a moment to comment on some of the statements that have been made, and give my impression of this particular bill as it relates to the increase in members' indemnities.

On the basis of being a person with family responsibility, I wholeheartedly supported the increased indemnity. I shall go further and say I was somewhat cool a year or two ago to the question of the members' retiring fund. In view of the fact that it was pointed out by members of the opposition that the retiring fund would be a boon to the opposition, as was mentioned by the member for Rosetown-Biggan, I went along with it. I did not seek to create the impression mentioned by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway, that there have been poor public relations on this question. Let me tell the hon. member that there has been an equally poor public relations job done on members' indemnities. I know that if the members of his party spoke here as they did privately, the public relations job would not have been so poor. I feel that the \$10,000 indemnity—

The Chairman: I do not think I can allow a discussion of members' indemnities on a bill which concerns retiring allowances.

Mr. Byrne: I agree. The maximum pension of \$3,000 is approximately, in my estimation, a little more than half what a member receives in take-home pay from his total indemnity, plus expense allowance, so undoubtedly it is a fair and reasonable pension plan. I have no quarrel with that; but I am just pointing out that the indemnity should not have received such bad publicity, after all.

It has been suggested that some provision should be made for the widows of members of parliament. One member has said that the wives of members are enjoying themselves. Well, I hope they are. I would hope that every wife in Canada, in so far as is possible, is enjoying herself. But I want to say that any member's wife who was left at home, perhaps two or three thousand miles away, and had to look after a family without any assistance because the amount paid the member was not sufficient to keep

[Mr. Cardiff.]

them together, was not having too good a time of it. Those wives are doing a great service, and are working hard.

When it comes to the matter of pensions, I think they deserve the same treatment as the pensionable widows of other groups in the community. I am not suggesting only that we should increase payments made by the government. I think it should be done in the usual manner in which any pension is handled in industry, or under civil service pension plans. Under those plans the pensioner would receive smaller annual or monthly payments, and at his death the pension would be continued for his widow at a somewhat reduced rate. I do not think there should be any further contribution other than the \$3,000; but some arrangement could be made to attend to that matter, and in my opinion it should be done soon.

It has been pointed out that few members have been affected by the pension plan. However, as time goes on there will be more, and consideration should be given to this matter so the widows would be cared for.

The Chairman: Order. I can see now that I have been entirely too indulgent in allowing this discussion to proceed. I must say now that I shall have to rule out of order any further discussion about the extension of this provision to the widows of members.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, there are just two things I wanted to say. I confess you have put me in a bit of difficulty by the firmness of the ruling you have just made. However, perhaps you would permit me to say one or two sentences; and if Your Honour thinks I am going too far, please stop me. I suppose you will do that, without my asking for it.

I think it should be noted, particularly by the press, which is undoubtedly going to report this afternoon's discussion, that all those who have referred to the possibility of any change in the plan to include a provision for widows have emphasized that if such a provision is made it should be without any additional cost to the treasury. Otherwise, no hon. member would agree to it. Some have made the statement—

The Chairman: The hon. member invited me to interrupt him if I thought he was transgressing the ruling I made a moment ago. I hope he will not continue to discuss that subject. We should confine ourselves to the subject in hand.

Mr. Knowles: I agree; and I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for not stopping me until I had got my point across. The other point