

*Supply*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I do not want to be left out of this whole debate. Although I do not get to speak I would appreciate your speech to go through the Chair.

**Mrs. Brushett:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe, in your comments you indicated that age was certainly a criteria that should be looked at. The member also indicated double dipping in terms of future employment.

Would the hon. member also consider previous government pensions as a deterrent in addition to an MP pension as we look at double dipping?

[Translation]

**Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe):** Mr. Speaker, on the subject of fairness, we must be careful not to take away acquired rights. There are acquired rights. If it is felt that people have too many acquired rights and as a result of some administrative or other process they were given too much, if something was given which upon analysis and consideration is unacceptable, I think that amends must be made.

I will qualify that by saying that we must be careful, on the issue of fairness, to really state the question responsibly, so as not to penalize people who have already obtained certain advantages as a result of some regulation or law, perhaps entirely in good faith. Withdrawing these benefits would be somewhat like going back on one's word. I think that is the opposite of what we want to achieve.

What we want to do is to get things straight and put them in perspective. Above all, we want to be able to answer people who tell us that the double dipping which goes on in the present system is wrong. An MP is in Parliament for six years and regardless of age has a pension that he can take away with him. It is the same for the Senate. It is the same with the other House. Someone is appointed senator and has a salary until age 75, no questions asked, etc.

There is a question of fairness for the future. We must get things straight and not necessarily attack others.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Ianno (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on the motion before us. I am delighted because this is an important issue, an issue which the government has pledged to resolve.

The motion talks about replacing the existing MPs' pension plan with a pension plan that reflects the commitments made in the document entitled "Creating Opportunity, the Liberal Plan for Canada".

I am glad the motion recognizes the significant contribution that the red book is making to the debate on MPs' pensions. The

red book has helped to focus public attention on the changes required such as double dipping and, one step further, the need of a minimum age requirement.

It is on double dipping that I wish to speak today. As we know, double dipping means simultaneously drawing a salary from the federal government and a pension as a former member of Parliament. It is a practice that many of us have problems with.

• (1645)

Let me remind hon. members of the red book statement on double dipping. We said that a Liberal government will reform the pension plan of members of Parliament to end this double dipping. MPs should not be able to leave office and receive a pension from the federal government if they accept a new, full-time, paying job from the federal government. Nothing could be clearer than that.

This commitment has been repeated by the government since the last election. We will end double dipping. Former MPs will no longer be able to receive a pension and a salary from the federal government at the same time.

Before I go further let me say that I do not wish to cast any aspersions on former members of Parliament who were entitled under the existing act to receive both a pension and a federal salary. There are many former MPs who have served this country well and who continue to do good work in other federal positions. It is clear that the drawing of a pension and a salary at the same time from the public purse is unacceptable though. It is time that these rules are changed.

In the mid-1970s pensions were viewed increasingly as an earned right. Some people viewed pensions as deferred compensation. In their view reducing or suspending pensions on gaining another job was similar to retroactively cutting a pensioner's salary.

In 1975 the government decided that the fairest approach would be to allow federal pensioners to draw pensions and salary unless they again came under the same pension plan. Today this government believes that double dipping must go.

The act which this opposition motion attempts to address is of course the Members of Parliament Retirement Allowances Act. However, the optimum word is retiring. The act was not intended to supplement working former parliamentarians but to provide a retiring allowance for them.

Many Canadians are expressing dissatisfaction with their politicians' pensions and double dipping is contributing to this negative image. We must continue changing the attitudes Canadians have toward their members of Parliament. Turning it around will require time and firm decisions. One of those decisions must be to end this double dipping.