

Supplementary Retirement Benefits Act (No. 2)

Mr. Althouse:—when one adds the Liberal Members who decided to vote against the six and five proposal, to defeat Bill C-124; but our friends to the right chose, instead of standing up for a principle, to go on holidays. Therefore, instead of defeating the Government or at least defeating that particular Bill brought in by the Government, the Bill was passed, and we now have the imposition of six and five because of a lack of interest on the part of Tory Members.

Just this past week we have also noted an attempt, with regard to holding up the legislation, to raise the ire of most people across the country on the side of the pensioners, because while civil service pensioners, old age pensioners, baby bonus benefits and child allowance credits may be affected in a series of Bills coming before the House, we do not know what other low income group will be the next to suffer from the six and five imposition.

● (1200)

We have seen the way the Tories reacted last week when the motion to adjourn the House was offered by our party. They had an excellent opportunity to hold up this Bill and to carry on the delaying tactics so that this dreadful imposition would not be placed on our civil servants who are retired. Instead of giving it the good support that they gave oil company profits last March, when they stayed out for 15 days to protect oil companies, they would not stay out for 15 minutes to protect old age pensioners and civil servants.

The Liberal position has been varied. Mostly Government members support the Government, with a few notable exceptions. I was pleased to hear the Hon. Member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke (Mr. Hopkins), who spoke a few moments ago, say that he will be opposing this amendment and the Bill itself. I think more Ottawa Members on the Government side and, indeed, any Government Member who has a conscience and realizes the need for maintaining trust in contracts, should be voting against this Bill. I cannot understand why a Party that professes to be in favour of justice and a just society, in favour of maintaining incomes for low-income people, in favour of assisting people who are on pensions, could introduce such a Bill in the first place, but they have.

We have been watching, and so have civil service pensioners, the gyrations of some of the Members. I note the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans) is in the House today. He is reported to have been at a meeting of civil service pensioners in Ottawa in which he said he would not allow such an inequitable Bill to go through the House. I have heard him make speeches in this House since that time saying that adding one half of 1 per cent to the six and five, as this amendment proposes to do, to make it 6.5 per cent and 5.5 per cent as it applies to civil service pensions, will bring about the kind of equity he can support, and I understand he is going to support it.

When you look at the kind of pensions that Public Service pensioners are receiving, he is being bought out for a fairly

paltry sum. There are approximately 90,000 former contributors to the civil service pension fund that are taking home approximately \$8,100 on average annually. In addition to those 90,000 there are 32,500 on survivor benefits who are receiving approximately \$3,200 per year, making the average for all pensions paid in the order of \$6,900 per pensioner. Just look at what that means. It means that for the average pensioner receiving the \$6,900 per year, the extra one half of 1 per cent provides them with \$34.50 per year more. This is a princely sum for the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre to have—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair regrets to interrupt the Hon. Member but the time allotted to him has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There appears to be unanimous consent.

Mr. Althouse: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will finish rather quickly. I was pointing out that the average pensioner receives \$6,900 per year, so the extra one half of 1 per cent means they will receive \$34.50 per annum extra, which works out to about 66 cents per week. With that princely amount of money, the average retired civil servant who has retired in Ottawa has almost enough money to make a one-way bus trip downtown. It will not be enough to get him home, but if he adds a few cents he can get downtown. The knowledgeable economist from Ottawa Centre is willing to call this equity.

I think the case has been well made in this House. I will not speak any longer on the Bill. We in this Party will be opposing the amendment and the Bill itself, and we hope that more of the Members on the Government side will see fit to support this stance as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt motion No. 2?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And more than five Members having risen:

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to section (11) of Standing Order 79, the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred.