

*Government Orders*

be very much a referendum on issues like MP pensions. I do not believe by any means this issue will go away even if government members defeat this amendment.

We will see as in the Ontario election this is a hot issue and will still be a hot issue in the next federal election. Voters will ask for members to cut their pensions without any increase in pay, a suggestion which I think is perfectly reasonable.

Motions Nos. 2 and 3 change the bill so that a member who dies before the expiry of the 60-day decision period is assumed not to have opted in. Bill C-85 automatically opts these people in. I guess Reformers would rather assume the best of people than the worst of people.

It seems strange the government would make the default option here an assumption of action of opting in. I understand a lot of pressure is being placed on backbench Liberals to opt into this plan so the driving forces of the plan, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, do not look too bad. Forcing dead MPs to opt into the pension plan is taking the idea of party discipline to new heights or to new depths even for the Liberal Party.

We know who will bear the brunt of the public backlash of this in the next election. It will be the Liberal backbenchers who did not really support the plan, who were told to participate and who if they lose the election will lose all pension in any case. This is really a remarkable coincidence of both lack of intelligence and lack of integrity coming together on an issue.

Motions Nos. 5 and 7 change the bill to allow all members to opt out completely. Under Bill C-85 MPs who as of October 1993 already had six years of service could only opt out of benefits earned after the last federal election, thus creating the terms trough regular and trough light which we like to refer to, the two tier system.

We have talked already about how this inability for longer serving MPs to completely opt out of Bill C-85 creates the two tier system. However, this is a minor issue in my opinion. The real issue is the two tier system between MP pensions and what is available to other Canadians.

One of the witnesses who testified before the committee which studied this bill, and I use the term studied very loosely, Mr. Brian Corbishley of Edmonton, testified the pension proposed under Bill C-85 is about seven times more generous than a typical public sector plan and four times more generous than a typical private sector plan. Mr. Corbishley's testimony and others should be listened to much more carefully and much more seriously than some of the government members seem to take this issue.

In Alberta Mr. Corbishley's firm, Peat Marwick, proposed a pension scheme for MLAs much less generous than that which

existed in Alberta at the time. The plan in Alberta at the time was almost identical to what the government is now proposing.

In the heat of the pre-election build up in Alberta the government refused to significantly alter that plan to deal with the objections of taxpayers and citizens and it was increasingly looking like that government would face defeat in the election. Ultimately Mr. Klein ended up abolishing the plan, a major factor in his winning the election and doing some of the good things in Alberta he is now trying to do.

What is interesting about this, and I urge Liberal members to consider it very carefully, is ultimately a half hearted attempt to reform the MLA pension plan in Alberta resulted in MLAs in Alberta having no pension plan whatsoever, a situation which I do not think is ideal but which will result if the government follows the course it is on.

• (1015)

I urge members once again to consider some of these amendments. They will significantly alter the bill to make it more acceptable to the public. Ultimately the public will find this bill unacceptable. We know the MP pension plan will die because of the unreasonable form it is in today. It will die in any form and there will be no increase in compensation that the members on the other side so earnestly desire and do not deserve.

In any case, I ask them to consider these amendments and I thank them for their patience.

**Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few points with respect to the amendments put forward by the hon. member for Calgary West because they deserve some comment.

They are clearly amendments—

**An hon. member:** You already gave your comments.

**Mr. Milliken:** No, I have not spoken on the bill. This is the first time I have spoken to the bill at this stage in the House. The hon. member should be pleased that he is getting a balanced approach to the bill instead of the twisted rhetoric that the Reform Party is engaging in.

I want to point out a couple of things that are important to the Canadian public in viewing the bill. We are hearing a great deal from members of the Reform Party about wanting to abolish the pension altogether. They say that if we get rid of these pensions then everything would come up roses and we would solve the problem.

I want to point out first of all that some members of the House were elected at a time when there was not significant discussion in the House or in the country about abolition of these pensions.